K. STEVE McCORMICK

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BY

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PREFACE

In this book I have told the story of ten eventful years in the history of the Methodist Church. I have attempted to show the evolution of its organization during that formative period when its essential characteristics were determined. But John Wesley has continued to fascinate me. I have tried to represent him as he appeared to the men of his century. Those who are acquainted with illuminated missals will sometimes have found that the artists have been so anxious to invest their saints with the glory of the aureole that its splendour has prevented us from seeing the form and features of the man. I have tried to avoid this mistake in my representation of Wesley. Those who have the power to read his inmost thoughts admire him all the more because they find that he was ' a man of like passions with themselves.'

In my study of John Wesley I have been greatly assisted by Dr. J. Alfred Sharp's permission to use some of the documents which are under his care. The Rev. Marmaduke Riggall's transcripts of these documents have been of great service to me. My helpers of the Wesley Historical Society have again responded to all my appeals. They also deserve my thanks. Once more the Rev. John Elsworth has borne the burden of preparing an admirable Index; I am sure it will be welcomed by my readers.

June, 1925. J. S. S.

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I

THE DEVIZES

In a former volume we have described the processes by which the foundations of the Methodist Church were laid by John and Charles Wesley and those who were associated with them in their courageous attempt to evangelize the people of England. Among the workers John Wesley occupies the chief place, but he would have been the first to confess that without the aid of his brother, his assistants and helpers, his local preachers and exhorters, his band and class-leaders, and the officers of his Societies, his work would have failed. He knew, moreover, that the success of his mission had been secured in a remarkable degree by the moral and spiritual excellence of the members of his numerous Societies. Their consistent conduct in their own neighbourhoods had emphasized and illustrated his teaching and that of his itinerating evangelists. The foundations of the Methodist Church were laid during the years 1739 to 1746. We shall now proceed to describe events which will help us to see the progress of the building. Remembering at all times the fellow workers of John Wesley, it is essential that we should watch him with special care. He dominates the position. His counsel, example, and influence knit the Societies into an invincible unity. If that unity had been destroyed the Methodist Church, which has now stood for nearly two centuries, would never have been built.

Searching the highways and byways of England for the horseman with whom we have become familiar, we catch sight of him, on January 13, 1747, riding from Newbury to The Devizes. He is probably reading a book; but it is possible that he is attempting to solve the problem presented by the name of the town to which he is going. That problem still keeps the archaeologists busy. We shall be safe if we follow the leading of Dr. Edwin Guest. He says that the district where the Roman road from London to Bath stooped down into

Welsh territory was known as 'the borders,' and that, when Devizes was founded, in the twelfth century, it took its name from the district, and was called Divisae, according to the phraseology of the period. He considers that 'Devizes' is nothing more than a barbarous anglicism for 'Divisae.' Mr. Freeman carries us a little farther. He says, 'the castle "ad Divisas" has become Devizes, or, rather, The Devizes. The article was used as late as Clarendon's time, and we fancy much later; the popular name of the place is "The Vize."'[1] Mr. Freeman's 'fancy' was justified, for the *Journals* of the Wesleys furnish clear evidence of the use of the article in their days.

When John Wesley reached The Devizes he found that the Society which had been formed there was in great peril. Riding into the town, he was greeted with oaths, curses, and threatenings. He soon learned that the outburst against the Methodists had been caused by the curate. It had become known that Wesley was to preach in the evening at Mr. Clark's, and throughout the day the curate had gone from house to house stirring up the people against the Methodists. He had done more. He had set up an advertisement in the most public places of the town which announced that 'An Obnubilative Pantomime Entertainment' was to be exhibited at Mr. Clark's. Wesley omits the latter part of this advertisement, as it contained a kind of *double entente* which a modest person could not well repeat. In spite of the curate's exertions Wesley preached. Many of the mob came into the house; they listened and stood still; no one opened his mouth; attention sat on the face of every hearer. There was no storm that night; but in a few weeks it broke on the Society with exceptional fury.

On January 14 John Wesley rode to Bristol, where he spent a week in great peace. It was during this restful interval that an event occurred which is of great interest in the eyes of those who watch the quiet evolution of the constitutional system of Methodism. Among the more prominent of Wesley's lay preachers Joseph Cownley stands out clearly. He was born at Leominster, in Herefordshire. In 1744 he began to preach in his native town. His work was so successful that towards

[1] See Guest's *Origines Celticae*, ii. 255; Freeman's *English Towns and Districts*, 142.

the end of 1746 Wesley sent for him to meet him in Bristol. In January, 1747, he was accepted as an itinerant preacher; and in the 'Old Room' in the Horsefair we are able to see the manner of his appointment to his responsible work. He kneeled down; and then Wesley having put a New Testament into his hand, said to him, 'Take thou authority to preach the gospel,' and gave him his benediction.[1] This simple ceremony sheds light on Wesley's method of receiving a 'labourer' in early days; it also illumines the path he afterwards travelled.

After a 'peaceful week' in Bristol John Wesley recommenced his work. On January 22 he set out to fulfil an appointment at Wick, a village near Bristol. In riding by the wall through St. Nicholas Gate a cart turned short from St. Nicholas Street and came swiftly down the hill. In the narrow passage a collision occurred. Wesley's horse was thrown down and shot his rider over his head. The cart-wheel passed close to his side, but did him no injury. A crowd gathered; but one of the bystanders asked him to go into his shop, where he got rid of some of the mud that besmeared his clothes. Then he mounted his horse, rode to Wick, and arrived there by the time appointed. When he got back to Bristol he found that a report of his death had spread through the town. But he joined with the great congregation in praising God, and preached on 'Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast.'

After visiting the little Societies in Somersetshire and Wiltshire, John Wesley travelled to London. On his way he passed through The Devizes, and found that although much pains had been taken to raise a mob the labour had been lost. There was only a slight disturbance when he preached. The next day, after preaching once more, he and his companion mounted their horses. A quiet civil multitude watched their departure; their attitude strengthened Wesley's opinion that there was no such thing as raising a mob at The Devizes! When he first expressed this opinion in the hearing of his brother, Charles Wesley made a sceptical note of it.

On February 24 Charles Wesley and his friend, Mr. Meriton, a clergyman from the Isle of Man, rode into The Devizes. The news of their arrival soon was noised abroad. They were staying with Mr. Clark, and when they stepped into the street, they were greeted with the sound of the bells of the church

[1] See *Early Methodist Preachers*, ii. 7.

rung backward, 'out of tune and harsh.' It was the tocsin summoning the rioters to begin their work. The street was full of men rushing hither and thither. They finally grouped themselves into a mob, the centre of which was the curate, its leader being 'the chief gentleman' in the town. We have seen the curate before, but must pause for a moment to give him a clearer definition. He was an Oxford man, and claimed to have been present when Charles Wesley preached before the University. In a sermon delivered in The Devizes church the curate declared that in his University sermon Charles Wesley had said, 'If you do not receive the Holy Ghost while I breathe upon you, you are all damned.' This singular reporter had gone about the town stirring up the people, and trying to persuade the gentry to assist him in his opposition to the Wesleys. He had failed to raise a mob during the visits of John Wesley; but when Charles Wesley arrived his prospects of success brightened. He was seen in the street, surrounded by a crowd, and 'dancing for joy.'

Charles Wesley and his companion had gone to the house of Mr. Rogers, where the Methodists were gathered together, 'praying and exhorting one another to continue in the faith, and through much tribulation enter the Kingdom.' Suddenly the mob dashed up to the door. The air was rent with the cry, 'Bring him out! Bring him out!' Charles Wesley's name was frequently shouted. The mob intended to throw him into the horse-pond, but they had, first, to get him into their clutches. For an hour they continued the hubbub, varying the proceedings by smashing the windows and tearing down the shutters of the shop. The mob raged without, the Methodists prayed within. The house was in a state of siege. A wagon blocked up the door. The evening darkness was growing, and lights had been placed in the street to prevent Wesley from stealing away unperceived. One man, however, managed to escape from the house. He found the Mayor, and persuaded him to come to Mr. Rogers's house. He appeared with two constables, and spoke affably to the rioters. For some reason the rioters dispersed for a time; but they gathered again at the inn, and wreaked their vengeance on the preachers' horses.

Charles Wesley slept in the house next door to Mr. Rogers's, a Baptist magnanimously giving him shelter. At seven o'clock

the next morning he walked quietly to the house of Mrs. Phillips and began to preach. The mob surged into the street. The little congregation was assembled on the ground floor of the house, and Charles Wesley ordered all the doors to be thrown open. This order gave the leaders of the mob their opportunity. They had brought a fire-engine with them, and they began to pour a stream of water into the house. Mr. Burough, a constable who was friendly to the Methodists, deprived them of the spout, but some of them ran for the larger engine, and soon it began to play upon the people. Windows were broken, rooms flooded, and their contents spoiled.

Charles Wesley had retired to an upper room. The rioters burst into the house, laid hold of one man, dragged him out, and threw him into the horse-pond; breaking his back, it is said, in the process. The fire-engine at last gave out and had to be replenished. While it was being filled certain 'gentlemen' sustained the jaded energies of the mob by bringing them pitchers of ale. The situation became desperate. Mr. Meriton, feeling that the end was come, hid his money and watch 'that they might do good to somebody' when found. The crisis came. The rioters were on the point of breaking into the house when suddenly Mr. Burough, the constable, remembered the Riot Act. At the peril of his life he read it. The scene changed. With the exception of 'the guard,' in less than an hour the mob had dispersed. The siege had lasted for three hours. It had been conducted by a thousand 'wild beasts.' Charles Wesley says, 'None but the Invisible Hand could have kept them one moment from tearing us to pieces.' The conduct of the constable causes us to wonder why the Mayor was not conspicuous in this scene. Like the prudent man commended in the Proverbs, having 'foreseen the evil' he had left the town. And so 'the curate's mob,' being free from magisterial restraint, indulged in an orgy of ruffianism.

The truce was transient. Once more Mrs. Phillips's house was beset. Charles Wesley, who had an extensive knowledge of the foul-mouthedness of a mob, declares, that he had never heard such threatenings, curses, and blasphemies. It seemed hopeless to resist the besiegers, and Mr. Meriton counselled surrender before the night. Charles Wesley, however, thought they had better wait 'till the Lord should point out the way.'

We listen to the conversation in that upper room. As they were talking to each other quietly Charles Wesley paused. He had heard a strange sound over his head. The rioters were untiling the roof. At this point the voice of a little girl was heard calling outside the door of their room. They listened and she said, 'Mr. Wesley! Mr. Wesley! creep under the bed. They will kill you. They are pulling down the house.' Then her voice was drowned in the shout of a ruffian close to them, 'Here they are behind the curtain!' Thinking that the moment of death had come, the little group retired to the farthermost corner of the room. Wesley said, 'This is the crisis!' Then they waited. After a few moments a great silence fell on the house. They 'heard not a breath without; they wondered what was come to them'; they thought of the stilling of the tempest 'on deep Galilee.'

After an hour of this extraordinary quietness Mr. Clark knocked at the door and brought with him a constable who had been among the rioters. He tried to extract from Wesley a promise that he would not come to The Devizes again to preach, but failed. Then he went away and gave his answer to the mob. When he had gone, Charles Wesley and Mr. Meriton, perceiving that the rioters were hesitating, prepared to depart. They sent for their horses. The constables, having recovered their courage, had gathered their posse to guard them. But the crowd watched them with hungry eyes. Charles Wesley saw that the constables' defence was worthless. What should be done? Mr. Meriton thought that they had better escape by the back door. Charles Wesley lifted his heart to heaven and again asked for counsel. The message came, 'Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?' After reading that verse he 'went forth as easy as Luther to the Council.' When they entered the street they were received with a general shout. They mounted their horses and rode along at a slow pace, making their way through a yelling crowd. 'Such fierceness and diabolical malice' Wesley had never seen before in human faces. The companions were separated; looking back, Wesley saw Mr. Meriton on the ground, and two bull dogs upon him. His horse, which had been worried by the dogs, came racing along, but was stopped by Wesley. The dogs were called off, and Mr. Meriton joined his friend,

remounting his horse with great composure. Then these soldiers of the cross rode on leisurely, till out of sight.

Out of sight of the mob; but we keep our eyes on them as they mend their pace, and come to Seend; then, at seven o'clock, they arrive at Wraxall. Friends gather round them. They tell the story of their deliverance. Then they sing a hymn. It is rarely heard now; but in the far-off days we are describing it often rose from the lips of a persecuted people. We do not know when it was written by Charles Wesley. The theory of Mr. W. C. Sheldon, who attributed it to the time of the 'tumults' in Wednesbury, may be correct. As we listen to the singing of the Methodists in Wraxall on that February evening, these words steal across the years:

Worship, and thanks, and blessing,
And strength ascribe to Jesus!
Jesus alone
Defends His own,
When earth and hell oppress us.

Jesus with joy we witness,
Almighty to deliver;
Our seals set to,
That God is true,
And reigns a King for ever.[1]

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i. 442–449; *Methodist Hymn-Book*, 465; *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv. 123.

II

ADVANCE IN THE NORTH

When Charles Wesley and Mr. Meriton were enduring the assaults of the rioters at The Devizes, John Wesley was steadily making his way to the North of England. On February 24, the first day of the riots, we see him at Tetney, near Grimsby, examining the little Society there. He says, 'I have not seen such another in England. In the class-paper, which gives an account of the contribution for the poor, I observed one gave eightpence, often tenpence, a week; another thirteen, fifteen, or eighteen pence; another sometimes one, sometimes two shillings. I asked Micah Elmoor, the leader, an Israelite indeed, "How is this? Are you the richest Society in all England?" He answered, "I suppose not; but all of us who are single persons have agreed together to give both ourselves and *all we have* to God. And we do it gladly; whereby we are able, from time to time, to entertain all the strangers that come to Tetney, who often have no food, nor any friend to give them a lodging."'[1] It must be remembered that at this time the money contributed weekly in the classes was given to the poor. The reference to the 'class-paper' should also be noted. We do not know when 'class-books' were generally introduced as substitutes for the 'papers.' Dr. John Lyth, writing of York, says that the 'class-paper' was superseded by the 'class-book' in that city somewhere about the year 1819.[2]

In the evening of the day when the assault on Charles Wesley and Mr. Meriton was waxing furious in The Devizes, John Wesley was at Hainton, which lies at some distance from Tetney. The sun had set; but he found a larger congregation had assembled than he had seen before in the place. Hainton had a considerable Roman Catholic population; and, at previous visits, his preaching had impressed many of them.

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 281.

[2] *Early Methodism in York*, 155.

Instead of entering into controversy, he had addressed himself to the supreme question, 'What must I do to be saved?' At this visit, standing in the evening twilight, he declared to Protestants and Romanists 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.' He felt that he was speaking 'winged words'; they flew, as arrows from the hand of the Most High, to the heart of every hearer. It is impossible to ignore the contrast between the Hainton congregation and the roaring mob at The Devizes.

Following John Wesley's journey to the North, we check our footsteps again and again in order that we may note facts that show the advance of Methodism among the English people. It is necessary to resist many of the appeals to our attention, but it is imperative that we should yield to some of them. York arrests us. At that time the city, which afterwards became, and still is, a famous Methodist stronghold, was successfully held against the intrusion of the Wesleys and their preachers by Archbishop Herring. Mr. Abbey, in *The English Church and its Bishops*, 1700–1800, has given us a sketch of Dr. Herring. It was a time when 'comprehension' was in the air; and that fact may explain why the Archbishop was friendly with some of the leading Nonconformist ministers. But Wesley and the Methodists were the objects of his invincible dislike. He wrote a circular letter concerning them and sent it to all the clergy of his diocese. John Wesley answered it in his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*. He addressed himself to the following propositions which the letter contained: (1) That the religion Wesley preached consisted in enthusiastic ardour; (2) That such religion can be attained by very few; (3) That it can be understood by very few; (4) That it cannot be practised without breaking in upon the common duties of life; and (5) That all this may be proved by Wesley's own account of it.[1] Such assertions invited and received a crushing reply from the calm and relentless logician. The Archbishop's 'circular letter' had been accompanied by a copy of the well-known pamphlet entitled *Observations on the Conduct and Behaviour of a certain Sect, usually distinguished by the name of Methodists*. Dr. Herring had probably extracted his 'propositions' from that production, which Wesley had answered. He does not seem to have read that answer. Notwithstanding the slightness

[1] Wesley's *Farther Appeal*, *Works* viii. 58, 8vo ed.

of his knowledge of the people whom he assailed, he was determined there should be no Methodism in the city of York. However, John Nelson was busy in the neighbourhood. Among other places he had formed a Society in Acomb, and the village was regularly visited by the lay preachers from Leeds and Birstall. But, says Dr. Lyth, 'some powerful opposition arrested Methodism at the gates of the city.' How did it find an entrance? Let us watch John Wesley on his journey. On February 27, 1747, he preached at Acomb at seven o'clock in the evening. The congregation was surprisingly quiet. Many had come from York, and, though the preacher used the utmost plainness of speech, several of them came again at five o'clock the next morning. At the close of the service he spoke to a few 'who were desirous to join heart and hand together in seeking the kingdom of God.' This was the commencement of the York Society. It numbered at first less than half a dozen members. They were formed into a class, under the care of Thomas Slaton, of Acomb, which met in the house of Thomas Stodhart, the grandfather of a once well-known hymn-tune composer. Thomas Slaton led the class for a year, and was then succeeded by Thomas Stodhart, whose house was at the bottom of the Bedern.

Leaving the little company of York Methodists to commence their perilous upward journey, we must quit the neighbourhood for a time, and follow Wesley as he rides farther North. He is on his way to Newcastle; but on March 1 he reaches a small Yorkshire village which possesses special interest. He had visited the place before. Under the date March 28, 1745, when he was in Newcastle, the following significant entry appears in his *Journal*: 'A gentleman called at our house, who informed me his name was Adams; that he lived about forty miles from Newcastle, at Osmotherley, in Yorkshire, and had heard so many strange accounts of the Methodists that he could not rest till he came to inquire for himself. I told him he was welcome to stay as long as he pleased, if he could live on our Lenten fare. He made no difficulty of this, and willingly stayed till the Monday sennight following, when he returned home fully satisfied with his journey.'[1] On Monday, April 15, 1745, Wesley preached at Northallerton, and Adams and some of his neighbours

[1] *Journal*, iii. 169.

met him after the service. Adams expressed a wish that he would preach in his house at Osmotherley, and he at once consented. Horses were saddled, and the little cavalcade rode away. They reached their destination between nine and ten o'clock at night; but the people of the village gathered together, and Wesley preached to them. The next morning he preached again. His text was Rom. iii. 22, which declares 'the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference.' The congregation was large; several of the people had sat up all night for fear they should not wake in the morning. On inquiry Wesley found that many of them either were or had been Roman Catholics. He wondered at the ways of God. Without any care or thought of his own he had been brought 'into the centre of the Papists in Yorkshire.'[1]

Wesley's congregation had listened to him so attentively that he was encouraged to visit Osmotherley a second time in 1745. It was on September 16, when the country was surging with the excitement produced by the Pretender's invasion of England. A cautious critic might have suggested that such a visit to 'the centre of the Papists in Yorkshire' at such a time might have been postponed; but Wesley went to Osmotherley to see his friend Adams. He does not seem to have preached, but he saw the 'poor remains' of the old chapel on the brow of the hill, as well as those of the monastery, called Mount Grace. He says: 'The walls of the church, of the cloister, and some of the cells, are tolerably entire; and one may still discern the partitions between the little gardens, one of which belonged to every cell. Who knows but some of the poor, superstitious monks, who once served God here according to the light they had, may meet us by and by in that house of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?' Considering Wesley's acquaintance with the works of the best and most spiritual Roman Catholics, it is not difficult to divine the answer he would have given to his own question. He was a strong Protestant; but the strength of his convictions did not blind him to the excellence of people who differed from him in creed and opinion. The breadth of his charity was a part of his mental and moral equipment;

[1] *Journal*, iii. 171.

without it he never would have succeeded in a mission that was slowly opening before him, and for which he was being prepared—a mission to the most Roman Catholic county in this kingdom.

Osmotherley was often visited by Wesley. A Methodist Society was formed there. At this point it is only necessary to refer to the controversy which has arisen, and still continues, concerning the position of Adams at the time when Wesley first preached in the village. Was he then a priest of the Roman Church? Methodist antiquaries have investigated that question. It will be sufficient to indicate the conclusions reached by two of them. In the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* an article on this subject, by the Rev. J. Conder Nattrass, appeared a few years ago. It was entitled 'Adams, the Osmotherley Priest.' After examining the question in dispute, Mr. Nattrass sums up as follows: 'The identity of Wesley's friend with Peter of Alcantara Adams can scarcely be doubted. But whether he was a priest when he first made the acquaintance of Wesley in 1745, and still more whether he so continued to the end of his life, may well be questioned.' In a subsequent number of the *Proceedings* the Rev. T. E. Brigden, after examining a long list of authorities, wrote this note:

> Probably our conclusion will be that Thomas Adams was at one time a priest; that he renounced Romanism; that he married; that he was *not* a priest when Wesley made his acquaintance; that Wesley never called him a priest; that a few nineteenth-century writers did so and followed a local tradition.[1]

In Wesley's record of his visit to Osmotherley on Sunday, March 1, 1747, there is no mention of Adams; but his recollection of the events of that day filled him with delight. He reached Osmotherley about ten o'clock in the morning. Mr. Dyson, the clergyman, had just come into the village. He was the incumbent of Osmotherley, but resided at Carlton-in-Cleveland. Wesley sent him a message offering to assist him if he pleased, either by reading prayers or preaching. Mr. Dyson came to him immediately, and said he would willingly accept his assistance. As they walked to church together Mr. Dyson said, 'Perhaps it would fatigue you too much

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vii. 28–31, xi. 164–165.

to read prayers and preach too.' Wesley gladly accepted the double service. Mr. Dyson lent him the church for an afternoon service. At three o'clock a large congregation assembled. Those who had been opponents of the Methodists were deeply affected; and, says Wesley, 'All were convinced we are no Papists. How wisely does God order all things in their season!' It was a memorable experience. It brought a gleam of March sunshine into the stormy days of Wesley's life.

The next day Wesley rode to Newcastle, and stayed there until April 20. He preached in the neighbouring towns, examined the Societies, and filled up his time with fruitful work. After examining the classes at Newcastle, he notes the fact that the Society, which the first year consisted of above eight hundred members, had been reduced to four hundred. But, according to the old proverb, Wesley held that the half is sometimes more than the whole. Throughout his career he never yielded to the illusion of numbers. His aim was to secure the moral and spiritual tone of the members of his Societies. In order to achieve his purpose he relied on two things—courage and steadiness in the preachers who examined the classes, and common sense and common honesty in the leader of each class. In illustration he records the questions which he sometimes put to the leaders of the classes when he examined them. He says: 'I ask, Does this and this person in your class live in drunkenness or any outward sin? Does he go to church, and use the other means of grace? Does he meet you as often as he has opportunity?' If the leader would not answer these questions, it was open to any member of the class to answer them for him. Then 'from things alleged and proved' the examiner proceeded to exercise discipline. After such a thorough examination of the four hundred members of the Newcastle Society, Wesley says, 'We shall not be ashamed of any of these when we speak with our enemies in the gate.' The discipline exercised in the early Societies was strict, but it resulted in the training of a multitude of people whose irreproachable conduct was one of the chief causes of the triumph of Methodism.

During this visit to Newcastle Wesley snatched some time for reading Neal's *History of the Puritans*. The book attracted him. He had become acquainted with it some years before.[1]

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 295.

Studying it again more thoroughly, he confesses that he was amazed at two things; first, the execrable spirit of persecution which drove the Puritans out of the Church, and with which Queen Elizabeth's clergy were as deeply tinctured as ever Queen Mary's were; and, secondly, at the weakness of the Puritans, whom he calls 'those holy confessors,' many of whom spent so much of their time and strength in disputing about surplices and hoods, or kneeling at the Lord's Supper. It is also noticeable that during this visit to Newcastle he gathered some young men around him, and read with them a *Compendium of Rhetoric* and a *System of Ethics*. His mind was still busy with a scheme for the establishment of 'a Seminary for Labourers'; and we judge that he seized this opportunity to act as a tutor. It speaks highly for the intelligence of the Newcastle 'young men' that he was led to say, 'I see not why a man of tolerable understanding may not learn in six months' time more of solid philosophy than is commonly learned at Oxford in four, perhaps seven, years.' Wesley was speaking as an old Oxford tutor; and his statement will not excite the surprise of any who have read Dr. A. D. Godley's descriptions of the character of the teaching in the University in the eighteenth century.[1]

John Wesley left Newcastle on Monday, April 20. He did so with reluctance. He confesses that he could gladly have spent six weeks more in the neighbourhood. The Orphan House was a place of refuge. Mrs. Grace Murray was the housekeeper, and she and the other inmates dwelt together in peace. But Wesley's itinerary had been fixed, and so he turned his face to the south. He reached Osmotherley in the evening, and found that, as he had expected, Mr. Dyson had been vehemently attacked by the neighbouring clergy and gentry for allowing him to preach in his church. That he might be exposed to no further difficulty, instead of claiming the promise that had been given him, Wesley preached on a tombstone in the churchyard. His comment on the occurrence is: 'Some will not hear even the word of God out of a church; for the sake of these we are often permitted to preach in a church. Others will not hear it in a church; for their sakes we are often compelled to preach in the highways.' In looking at the large

[1] *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century*, chapters iii. to vii.

and serious congregation gathered in the Osmotherley churchyard we are surprised to see John Nelson standing in the crowd. He seems to have been the victim of rough usage; his head is bound up, he is pale from loss of blood. He has ridden over from York to persuade Wesley not to go to Acomb. After the service the two Methodist pioneers had a conversation. Nelson informed Wesley that, if he went to Acomb, he would be assaulted by a band of men who had vowed to kill him. They had made a similar vow in his own case; and on the previous Sunday they had nearly accomplished their purpose. Nelson told Wesley the story of that Easter Day riot, when a mob of 'gentlemen' from York had assailed him, and almost battered the life out of him. Anxious for Wesley's preservation, he had mounted his horse on the next day and ridden to Osmotherley. He succeeded in changing Wesley's intention, and in persuading him to go to Leeds.

The doings of the 'gentlemen's mob' are fully detailed in Nelson's published *Journal*.[1] Wesley's 'notes' of the conversation he had with Nelson in Osmotherley are as follows:

> Here John Nelson met me. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, he had preached at Acomb and the neighbouring places; on Good Friday, in particular, on Heworth Moor, to a large and quiet congregation. On Easter Sunday, at eight, he preached there again to a large number of serious hearers. Towards the close of his discourse a mob came from York, hired and headed by some (miscalled) gentlemen. They stood still, till an eminent Papist cried out, 'Why do not you knock the dog's brains out?' On which they immediately began throwing all that came to hand, so that the congregation was quickly dispersed. John spoke a few words, and walked towards York. They followed with showers of bricks and stones, one of which struck him on the shoulder, one on the back, and, a little before he came to the city, part of a brick hit him on the back part of the head and felled him to the ground. When he came to himself two of Acomb lifted him up and led him forward between them. The gentlemen followed, throwing as before, till he came to the city gate, near which lived an honest tradesman, who took him by the arm and pulled him into his house. Some of the rioters swore they would break all his windows if he did not turn him out. But he told them resolutely, 'I will not; and let any of you touch my house at your peril. I shall make you remember it as long as you live.' On this they thought good to retire.
>
> After a surgeon had dressed the wound in his head, John went

[1] See *Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 159–165.

softly on to Acomb. At five he went out in order to preach, and began singing a hymn. Before it was ended the same gentlemen came in a coach from York, with a numerous attendance. They threw clods and stones so fast on every side that the congregation soon dispersed. John walked down into a little ground, not far from Thomas Slaton's house. Two men quickly followed, one of whom swore desperately he would have his life. And he seemed to be in good earnest. He struck him several times, with all his force, on the head and breast, and at length threw him down and stamped upon him till he left him for dead; but, by the mercy of God, being carried into an house, he soon came to himself; and, after a night's rest, was so recovered that he was able to ride to Osmotherley.[1]

Such, in the barest outline, is the record of this savage assault. In John Nelson's *Journal* details are supplied which show that the intention of 'the gentlemen's mob' was to kill him. As one of the assailants was getting into the coach which bore some of the rioters back to York, Nelson heard him say, 'It is impossible for him to live; and if John Wesley comes on Tuesday we will kill him. Then we shall be quite rid of the Methodists for ever; for no one will dare to come if they two be killed.' So far as Nelson was concerned their purpose would probably have been accomplished. When, as some of them said, they had 'trodden the Holy Spirit out of him,' they uncovered a well and dragged him towards it. But a woman confronted them. She stood by the well, pushed several of them to the ground, and defeated their purpose. After her fine resistance there was a pause. Then two ladies who had come from York called the 'gentlemen' who were trying to throw Nelson into the well by their names. Finding that some of their friends were watching them, these ruffians were seized with sudden shame. They released their prey. Turning to their acquaintances who had called to them, they 'looked as men confounded.' The riot ceased; and all the mob set out for York, 'singing debauched songs.'[2]

On Friday, May 1, John Wesley read prayers and preached in Haworth church to a numerous congregation. With the exception of the tower the old church has disappeared, but in Jessop's *Methodism in Rossendale* there is a good picture of it which has been reproduced in the standard edition of John Wesley's *Journal*.[3] The parsonage at that time was

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 290. [2] *Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 163.
[3] Jessop, 72; *Journal* iv. 213.

known as 'Sowdens.' It was at some distance from the church, and stood on the edge of the moor. Mr. J. W. Laycock, in his *Methodist Heroes in the Great Haworth Round, 1734 to 1784*, makes the old parsonage stand out before us. Describing it as he saw it when he was a boy, he says that it was a large farmhouse commanding a prospect of quiet fields and the valley of the Worth. He thinks that part of the house was built in the Stuart period. Lying on 'the edge of the moor,' it was screened by a grove of stunted trees, which shielded it from the wild winds which sweep across the moorland immediately behind it. 'Sowdens' possesses special attraction in the eyes of a Methodist historian. It was the home of William Grimshaw; it was the pleasant resting-place of the Wesleys and Whitefield; in its kitchen the lay preachers often proclaimed the great truths brought to light in the evangelical revival.

May Day, 1747, marks a significant change in the relations of the Wesleys and Grimshaw. In January Charles Wesley had visited Haworth. He was not asked to preach in the church, but held a service in a large house, which was not nearly large enough for the congregation. It is probable that 'the large house' was Emmott Hall, a picture of which appears in connexion with Mr. Nattrass's valuable *Notes on Early Methodism in Haworth*.[1] Charles Wesley stayed at 'Sowdens'; and, in the morning before leaving his 'dear brother Grimshaw's,' he said to his host that 'he had feared where no fear was, there being no law either of God or man against his lending me his pulpit.' He left Grimshaw in a chastened state of mind. 'He was much ashamed at having given place to his threatening enemies.' He was a man of great natural courage; but such men sometimes have a weak place in their armour; they cannot always resist the force of public opinion. We know that for a time, the incumbent of Haworth was very sensitive to the criticisms of his parishioners; but, when John Wesley came, he preached in the church. Mr. Jessop says: 'In 1747 Grimshaw entered into most cordial relations with the Wesleys, and continued to his death to be one of their influential co-workers.'[2]

[1] For Mr. Nattrass's 'Notes' see *W.H.S. Proceedings*, x. 141–146, 165–168, 200–205. Mr. J. W. Laycock's photographs of Emmott Hall and 'Sowdens' appear in the *Proceedings* x. 165.

[2] *Methodism in Rossendale*, 76–77.

We are indebted to Mr. Laycock for much light on the beginning and growth of William Grimshaw's religious experience. He was inducted into the Haworth living in 1742. Before he came to his moorland parish he had passed through a spiritual experience that left an abiding mark on him. He had a dream which deeply impressed him. It led him to consecrate himself to the service of God. When he came to reside in Haworth he found that a man called William Darney, a Scotch pedlar, was preaching a strange doctrine in the neighbourhood. It is curious that Grimshaw at that time held the crude opinion that 'Justification by Faith' was a Popish doctrine. He heard that Darney was preaching it, and he determined to confute him. He met the Scotchman in secret interviews, and argued with him. The result that so often occurred at that time happened in his case. He was convinced that he had been mistaken, and that the pedlar was right. His religious experience deepened. The knowledge of the pardon of sins that comes through faith in Christ quickened everything that was good in him. He acted on his new convictions; stood by Darney when he preached in the open air on the moor, helped him in his services, and rejoiced in his success. We think this change took place in 1745, for there seems to be an allusion to it in a letter Grimshaw wrote to a friend, which contains a reference to Darney's preaching at Haworth in that year. We can read much into the sentence: 'The Lord was with him indeed, and I have reason to praise God for it.'

We wish we had more light on the early life of William Darney. He seems to have left Scotland and to have settled in Yorkshire about the year 1742. It is suggested that in Scotland he came under the influence of the great revival of religion which is inseparably connected with the name of James Robe, the minister of Kilsyth. Mr. Robe's constant theme was 'the necessity of the new birth.' Darney undoubtedly experienced that great change. Wandering southward, he crossed the border and found his way to Yorkshire. He was a clogger and pedlar by trade, and soon became known to the villagers as 'Scotch Will.' The fire of the evangelist burnt within him, and as he went about the moorlands selling his wares he was moved by the condition of the people. Previously, in October, 1741, he had

begun to preach; then he ceased for a time. But as he climbed the fells of West Yorkshire the call came again. He could not resist it. He preached in all kinds of places, winning here and there little groups of people for Christ. He saw that they would soon be scattered if they were not united together in Societies. He learned the lesson that John Wesley had been taught. Societies were raised up in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Then came his meeting with William Grimshaw, who, being much impressed by the results of his work, determined to help him. The effect of that decision was soon evident, and the success of his Societies was gradually secured.

The association of William Grimshaw with Darney had a far-reaching result, which we must now indicate. In a letter to John Wesley, dated August, 1747, Grimshaw says that about a month before he had met one of Darney's Societies. In connexion with this statement he mentions an interesting fact. A few days before writing this letter, in company with John Bennet, he had visited the Societies which Bennet had formed in Lancashire and Cheshire. Among other places he had gone to Rochdale, Manchester, and Booth Bank. Parting from Bennet, after a second visit to Manchester, he had visited some of Darney's Societies in Yorkshire and Lancashire. This excursion made a deep impression on his mind. Writing to John Wesley, he says:

I am determined, therefore, to add, by the divine assistance, to the care of my own parish, that of so frequent a visitation of Mr. Bennet's, William Darney's, the Leeds and Birstall Societies, as my own convenience will permit, and their circumstances may respectively seem to require; all along eyeing the Lord's will and purposes for me. If I find the Lord's pleasure be that I must launch out farther, I will obey. . . . What I purpose concerning surveying the above Societies, as I have great cause to believe it is the Lord's will, from the freedom I feel thereto in my heart, so I question not but it will be agreeable to your conception of it. I desire to do nothing but in perfect harmony and concert with you, and therefore beg you will be entirely free, open, and communicative to me. I bless God, I can discover no other at present, but every way a perfect agreement between our sentiments, principles, &c., of religion and my own; and therefore desire you will (as I do to you), from time to time, lay before me such rules, places, proposals, &c., as you conceive mostly conducive to the welfare of the Church, the private benefit of her members, and in the whole to the glory of the Lord. My pulpit, I hope shall be always at your's and

your brother's service, and my house, so long as I have one, your welcome home.[1]

While considering the events of the first half of the year 1747, we are struck with the importance of those which are connected with Haworth and its neighbourhood. When Charles Wesley left Haworth in January, he went away to visit William Darney's Societies; when John Wesley, in May parted from Grimshaw, he met Darney, who earnestly requested him to examine the Societies he had formed. Wesley responded to his request. As we follow his records in his *Journal* we see that he also visited Bennet's Societies, and his journeys spread over a week. In the course of his visitation, on May 7, he came to Manchester. A few young men had taken a room, in which a Society met, and he went to see it. He had no thought of preaching in Manchester, but was informed that John Nelson had given public notice that he would do so at one o'clock. He was faint and weary, having ridden at a swift trot, on a sultry day, for several hours. The little room would not contain a tenth part of the people who had assembled, and so he walked to Salford Cross. As he went along the crowd ran before him or walked after him. His thoughts were busy with the past. On reaching the Cross he paused for a time, looked around, and asked the people, 'Why do you look as if you had never seen me before? Many of you have seen me in the neighbouring church, both preaching and administering the Sacrament.'[2]

Banishing the past, he took for his text the insistent words, 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found.' There was no disturbance of any consequence. At the close of the service a man from Macclesfield, named George Pearson, interviewed him, and pleaded successfully with him for a visit to that town. In the evening Wesley reached Davyhulme, and was much refreshed both in preaching and meeting the Society. His notice of the visit to Davyhulme is significant. He says of the Society: 'Their neighbours here used to disturb them much; but a Justice of Peace, who feared God, granting them a warrant for the chief of the rioters, from that time they were in peace.'

[1] Walker's *Methodism in Halifax*, 54, 55.

[2] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 99.

The visitation of Darney's Societies made the Wesleys well acquainted with them. The effect is shown in the *Minutes* of the Conference that was held in London on Monday, June 15. In the list of the preachers 'who assist us in only one place' the name of William Darney appears. Wesley must have looked with some concern on the sudden enlargement of his sphere of work. We can imagine his relief when, in August, he received William Grimshaw's letter offering to bear the burden of the supervision of the newly-added Societies. His proposal had far-reaching effects. From that time Grimshaw became Wesley's trusted 'Assistant' in the North of England.

III

LONDON AND THE WEST

In his *Walks in London* Augustus J. C. Hare tells us that Little Britain was once as great a centre for booksellers as Paternoster Row is now. The modern explorer will be surprised at the statement. Sixty years ago we passed along the street for the first time, and found only one bookshop there. Since then we have wondered why John and Charles Wesley's *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, published in 1739, were to be obtained at 'Mr. Bray's, a brazier, in Little Britain.' The wanderer among the historic sites of London should possess a wide horizon. In the seventeenth century Little Britain was haunted by book-lovers. We look at one of them. He is turning over the books on counter or stall. Then he picks up one and dips into it after the manner of his kind. Suddenly something he has read brings the light of gladness into his eyes, and the book is bought. We recognize him. He is Lord Buckhurst, soon to be the Earl of Dorset. We hear the bookseller telling him that, if he approves of the book, he will be obliged if he will recommend it to his friends. He confesses that the copies on his hands are only 'so much waste paper.'[1] The buyer takes his purchase home, reads the book carefully, and thinks that Dryden should see it. He sends it to him. Dryden reads it and returns it, with the message: 'This man cuts us all out; and the ancients too!' He might well say so, for the book was Milton's *Paradise Lost*.[2]

Recalling the memories of our first visit to the neighbourhood, we think of the moment when, passing through Little Britain, we caught sight of the expanse of Smithfield. Looking towards the houses on the right hand, we saw something that fixed our attention. It was the arch of a gateway. Its

[1] The bookseller was probably T. Helder, whose shop, in Little Britain, bore the sign of 'The Angel.'

[2] Hare's *Walks in London*, 199, sixth ed.

simplicity and beauty proclaimed that it belonged to the Early English style of architecture. The hand of Time had pressed upon it. The dog-tooth ornaments between the mouldings had been worn down by wind and weather; but they retained the charm that style possesses in the eyes of those who are sensitive to the appeal of the past. We opened the gate, went through the passage under the houses, and found that we were in one of those abandoned burial-grounds then so common in London. The dreariness of the graves and the crumbling tombstones added a new horror to death. If some one had whispered that we were walking along the site of the nave of a famous church, the ghastliness of that strip of graveyard would have made the fact seem impossible. We found refuge in the church. The archaeologist tells us that it is only the choir of the old monastic church, with the first bay of the nave and fragments of the transepts; but every one who visited it in those distant years must have felt its impressiveness. We found that we were in the presence of pillars and arches whose quiet strength subdues the spirit of a man who can read their meaning. We were in the church of St. Bartholomew. We moved about among the monumental tombs. We saw the tomb of Rahere, who died on September 20, 1144. Two kneeling monks, one on either side of the recumbent figure of the founder, keep guard. One of them holds a Bible in his hands. It is open at Isa. li., and these are the prophetic words he is supposed to be reading: 'The Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.'[1]

Another tomb arrests us. It makes us think of years that followed long after the death of Rahere. It brings to mind the days of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. It is the tomb of Sir Walter Mildmay. He was the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Queen Elizabeth, and the founder of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. The Queen did not approve of his strong leaning towards Puritanism. When he presented himself at Court, after founding the college, she said to him,

[1] It is supposed that the text was chosen as having special reference to the change effected by the erection of the church. The spot selected for its site was a mere marsh, for the most part covered with water. A portion, which was dry, was occupied by the common gallows.

'Sir Walter, I hear you have made a Puritan foundation.' He replied, 'No, madam, far be it from me to countenance anything contrary to your established laws; but I have set an acorn which, when it becomes an oak, God knows what will be the fruit thereof.' The reply was diplomatic. Later, Fuller tells us, he lived 'in a Court-cloud, but in the sunshine of his country and a clear conscience.'

Turning away from the far-off days of our first visit to St. Bartholomew's, it is well known that great changes have been made in its interior and surroundings. The hands of reverent restorers have been at work. The 'waste places' have disappeared, and now the devout pilgrim finds 'joy and gladness' when he rests in the beautiful church. But we must think of its eighteenth-century condition as we recall the fact that on December 24, 1738, John Wesley preached there in the morning. At that time a few churches in London received him as a preacher; but, one by one, they were closed. In 1747 the only church that would admit him, his brother, and Whitefield, to its pulpit was St. Bartholomew's. Why was this exception made? The answer is to be found in the character and religious experience of its rector, Richard Thomas Bateman. In order to trace the stream of influence that had told on Bateman's life we should have to remind ourselves of a fact which is sometimes forgotten. The great revival of religion that came to this country in the eighteenth century had more than one spring-head. Before John and Charles Wesley began their mission both Scotland and Wales had come under the vivifying power of the preaching of converted men. In Wales the names of Griffith Jones, Daniel Rowlands, and Howell Davies, and of Howell Harris, the lay preacher, still shine brightly as the morning stars of the reformation in that country.

Let us look at the stream of influence. In addition to his parish work Griffith Jones kept a school, and Howell Davies was one of his pupils. He was converted through the ministry of his tutor. Determining to become a clergyman, he was ordained to the curacy of Llysyfran, in Pembrokeshire. His preaching raised strong opposition among some of the more influential parishioners, and through their means he was dismissed from his cure. Being set free, he preached in other parts of the county. The little churches of Pembrokeshire

could not contain the communicants who flocked to the Table of the Lord. On some occasions crowds stood outside waiting their turn, and the church had to be filled twice or thrice before all had received the Sacrament. He had a great influence in the county, and the effect of his preaching was shown in the changed lives of many people. Among the number was Richard Thomas Bateman, who had a living in Wales, and who was also the rector of St. Bartholomew's in Smithfield. At first Bateman had a dislike of Methodism, but increasing knowledge of the people in Wales and England led him to associate himself closely with the Calvinistic Methodists, and with John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and Lady Huntingdon. It is no wonder that in 1747 he achieved the high distinction of being the only clergyman in London who would permit the Wesleys and Whitefield to preach in his church.

Towards the close of May, 1747, John Wesley met Bateman in London. They had been friends at the University. Bateman asked him to preach in St. Bartholomew's, and he consented. On Sunday, May 31, he read prayers and preached there. We note that Charles Wesley followed his example in June. From time to time they also assisted the rector in the administration of the Lord's Supper. As we see these references in their *Journals* we wonder what the congregations thought of their presence in the pulpit. The people in general flocked to hear them, but the point that interests us concerns the attitude of the official mind. The evidence before us shows that the churchwardens had their own opinions concerning their rector's conduct. They objected to the invitations given to the Wesleys and Whitefield, and they carried their complaints to the Bishop of London. Dr. Gibson had given strict injunctions to the clergy of his diocese to exclude all Methodist preachers from their pulpits, and the injunction had been obeyed. The revolt of Bateman gave the bishop great offence, and proceedings were commenced against him.[1] The next year Dr. Gibson died. The complaints continued. An inspection of the registers of St. Bartholomew's Church reveals the fact that so late as 1750 the churchwardens were still complaining. But the See of London was then occupied by an exceptionally strong man, who knew that the principal

[1] *The Life and Times of the Countess of Huntingdon*, i. 93.

doctrines of the Methodists, which had been impugned by his predecessor, ought to be preached in every church. He was a man who dared to write and to preach on death and the coming judgement. In Abbey's *English Church and its Bishops* we find a letter from him addressed to Dr. Doddridge. It is a refreshing document. He says:

> Whatever other points of difference there are between us, yet I trust we are united in a hearty zeal for spreading the knowledge of the gospel, and for reforming the lives and manners of the people according to it. . . . I have seen the true spirit and the comfortable hopes of religion lost in the abundance of speculation, and the vain pretences of setting up natural religion in opposition to revelation; and there will be little hopes of a reformation till we are humble enough to know Christ and Him crucified.[1]

We do not know anything about Dr. Sherlock's reply to the complaints of the churchwardens of St. Bartholomew's; but his letter shows that he would not be eager to silence men who, by their preaching of Christ and Him crucified, were successfully 'spreading the knowledge of the gospel, and reforming the lives and manners of the people.'

We have anticipated the course of events in the case of St. Bartholomew's, and must now resume our description of the experiences of John Wesley in 1747. He returned to London on May 21, and stayed there nearly a month. He was very busy during that time. Confining our attention to his principal occupations, we note, first, that he made a significant change in the management of the Society in London. He reduced the number of the stewards, we presume at the Foundery, from sixteen to seven, and drew up 'instructions' for them. Those who watch the development of the constitutional arrangements of the Methodist Church will examine these instructions with care.

> 1. You are to be men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, that you may do all things in a manner acceptable to God.
>
> 2. You are to be present every Tuesday and Thursday morning, in order to transact the temporal affairs of the Society.
>
> 3. You are to begin and end every meeting with earnest prayer unto God for a blessing on all your undertakings.
>
> 4. You are to produce your accounts the first Tuesday in every month, that they may be transcribed into the ledger.

[1] Abbey's *English Church and its Bishops*, ii. 52.

5. You are to take it in turn, month by month, to be chairman. The chairman is to see that all the rules be punctually observed, and immediately to check him who breaks any of them.

6. You are to do nothing without the consent of the minister, either actually had or reasonably presumed.

7. You are to consider, whenever you meet, 'God is here.' Therefore be deeply serious; utter no trifling word; speak as in His presence, and to the glory of His great name.

8. When anything is debated, let one at once stand up and speak, the rest giving attention. And let him speak just loud enough to be heard, in love and in the spirit of meekness.

9. You are continually to pray and endeavour that a holy harmony of soul may in all things subsist among you; that in every step you may 'keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.'

10. In all debates you are to watch over your spirits, avoiding, as fire, all clamour and contention, being 'swift to hear, slow to speak'; in honour every man preferring another before himself.

11. If you cannot relieve, do not grieve, the poor. Give them soft words, if nothing else; abstain from either sour looks or harsh words. Let them be glad to come, even though they should go empty away. Put yourself in the place of every poor man, and deal with him as you would God should deal with you.

These instructions we whose names are under-written (being the present stewards of the Society in London) do heartily receive, and earnestly desire to conform to. In witness whereof we have set our hands.

N.B.—If any steward shall break any of the preceding rules, after having been thrice admonished by the chairman (whereof notice is to be immediately given the minister), he is no longer steward.[1]

During his short visit to London John Wesley's pen was busy. It is only necessary to mention the fact that on June 11 he finished his well-known *Letter* to the Bishop of London. In it he defended the Methodists against the charges which Dr. Gibson had brought against them. Those charges had been the subject of friendly conversations between Wesley and the Bishop; it was surprising that they should be repeated in the face of the public. But good came out of evil. The *Letter* deeply affected the Bishop, and he wrote no more against Wesley.[2]

On Sunday, June 14, John Wesley preached again in St. Bartholomew's. He was much pleased with the conduct of the congregation. There was no sign of lightness or inattention, and he was persuaded that all the seed sown there would

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 300–301.

[2] H. Moore's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 415.

not be lost. The service was a fit preparation for the great event of the next day. In his *Journal*, under the date Monday, June 15, he says, 'Our Conference began and ended on Saturday, the 20th. The *Minutes* of all that passed therein were some time after transcribed and published' (iii. 302). It is fortunate that we are not left in the dark concerning the proceedings of this Conference. Some time elapsed before the publication of the *Minutes*, but we know that a transcription of the proceedings was made by John Bennet. It appears in the first of the *Publications* of the Wesley Historical Society. The Conference assembled at the Foundery. On Monday morning there were present John and Charles Wesley, Westley Hall, and Charles Manning, four clergymen; and John Jones, Thomas Maxfield, Jonathan Reeves, John Nelson, John Bennet, John Downes, Thomas Crouch, Robert Swindells, and John Maddern, lay preachers. The next day Mr. Bateman of St. Bartholomew's, Mr. Piers, Howell Harris, and Thomas Hardwick, joined them. On Wednesday Mr. Perronet, the Vicar of Shoreham, came. The business followed the routine of the earlier Conferences, save that it was decided that it was not necessary 'at every Conference to read over all the Conferences we have had from the beginning.' It was considered to be enough to read the *Minutes* of the Conference immediately preceding, and so much of the rest as might be needful from time to time. Careful attention was paid to doctrinal matters; and the conclusions reached by the preceding Conference on justifying faith, assurance, and entire sanctification were reviewed. Their verbal expression was in some points revised, but the doctrines previously accepted were firmly maintained. When Mr. Perronet arrived, about ten o'clock on the Wednesday morning, the Conference had reached a very important item of the agenda. It was inevitable that the relation of the Methodist Societies to the National Church should be defined, and it was well that the question should be discussed in a Conference when seven clergymen were present. The discussion is so important that we must follow its record in the *Minutes*. The Conference defined 'schism,' as the word is used in the New Testament, as 'a causeless breach, rupture, or division made among the members of Christ, among those who are the living body of Christ, and members in particular.' Then it was asked,

'Are not the Methodists guilty of making such a schism?' The answer was, 'No more than rebellion or murder. They do not divide themselves at all from the living body of Christ. Let any prove it if they can.' Then the Conference faced other urgent questions, and their decisions we give in their own words.

Q. You profess to obey both the governors and rules of the Church, yet in many instances you do not obey them; how is this consistent? Upon what principles do you act, while you sometimes obey and sometimes not?

A. It is entirely consistent. We act at all times on one plain, uniform principle—'We will obey the rules and governors of the Church, whenever we can consistently with our duty to God; whenever we cannot, we will quietly obey God rather than men.'

Q. But why do you say you are thrust out of the Church? Has not every minister a right to dispose of his own church?

A. He ought to have, but in fact he has not. A minister desires I should preach in his church, but the Bishop forbids him. That Bishop then injures him, and thrusts me out of that church.

Q. Does a Church in the New Testament always mean 'a single congregation'?

A. We believe it does. We do not recollect any instance to the contrary.

Q. What instance or ground is there in the New Testament for a national Church?

A. We know none at all. We apprehend it to be a mere political institution.

Q. Are the three orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons plainly described in the New Testament?

A. We think they are, and believe they generally obtained in the Churches of the apostolic age.

Q. But are you assured God designed the same plan should obtain in all Churches throughout all ages?

A. We are not assured of this, because we do not know that it is asserted in Holy Writ.

Q. If this plan were essential to a Christian Church, what must become of all the foreign reformed Churches?

A. It would follow they are no parts of the Church of Christ—a consequence full of shocking absurdity.

Q. In what age was the divine right of episcopacy first asserted in England?

A. About the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Till then all the Bishops and clergy in England continually allowed and joined in the ministrations of those who were not episcopally ordained.

Q. Must there not be numberless accidental variations in the government of various Churches?

A. There must in the nature of things. As God variously dispenses His gifts of nature, providence, and grace, both the offices themselves and the officers in each ought to be varied from time to time.

Q. Why is it that there is no determinate plan of Church government appointed in Scripture?

A. Without doubt, because the wisdom of God had a regard to the necessary variety.

Q. Was there any thought of uniformity in the government of all Churches until the time of Constantine?

A. It is certain there was not; and would not have been then had men consulted the word of God only.[1]

It is clear that in these questions and answers we have a revelation of the opinions of John Wesley on the subject of national Churches. His position in regard to the Church of England has given rise to almost interminable discussion. It might have been sooner ended if the conclusions of the Conference in 1747 had been known to ardent controversialists. Bearing those conclusions in mind, we will watch their effect on Wesley's conduct in after years.

At the Conference of 1747 it was reported that the 'ordinary assistants' numbered twenty-three, Edward and Charles Perronet being included, to the satisfaction of their father. Thirty-eight lay preachers 'assisted in one place.' A wise decision was arrived at in the case of the communicants who crowded to the Lord's Table. In the first place it was determined to be 'exactly careful whom we admit into the Society'; and then it was resolved to give notes of admission to the Sacrament only to those who came to the minister to receive them, on the days appointed in each quarter. So far as we know, this is the first indication of the use of 'communicants' notes.' Among other regulations, there are 'smaller advices' concerning preaching. Among them we observe that the assistants are advised to sing no hymns of their own composing when conducting their services, a suggestion which looks towards William Darney.

The Conference also resolved on a very important step in relation to the visitation of the classes. It was agreed that John Wesley should select some of the 'assistants' to visit the classes in each place, and to write new lists of the members. He was also to give them power to regulate the bands, to deliver new tickets, to keep watch-nights and love-feasts.

[1] *W.H.S. Publications*, No. 1, 46–48.

In addition, these 'assistants' were to send him an exact account of the behaviour of the stewards, housekeepers, schoolmasters, and leaders. After fixing 'the journeys of the assistants' for the next six months the Conference dispersed, hoping to meet again in Bristol in May, 1748.[1]

On June 21 John Wesley preached at St. Bartholomew's. He tells us that he spoke very plain and strong words on the Gospel for the day—the story of Dives and Lazarus. The people listened intently, and the preacher says, 'God gave the audience ears to hear, so that they appeared as far from anger on the one hand as from sleepiness on the other.' After preaching at West Street in the afternoon, he and his companion, Robert Swindells, began their journey to Bristol.

As Wesley rode along to the West it is probable that he thought over the decision of the Conference as to field-preaching. In 1746 it did not seem clear to the Conference that the preaching in Moorfields should be continued, as the Foundery was a more convenient place, which contained as many as could hear. The hesitation was only temporary. In 1747 this question was put and answered, 'Have we not limited field-preaching too much?' The answer was, 'It seems we have. 1. Because our calling is to save that which is lost. Now we cannot expect the wanderers from God to seek us; it is our part to go and seek them. 2. Because we are more particularly called, by going out into the highways and hedges (which none will do if we do not) to compel them to come in. 3. Because that reason against it is not good, "The house will hold all that come." The house may hold all that will come to the houses, but not all that will come into the field. 4. Because we have always found a greater blessing in field-preaching than in any other preaching whatever.'[2] When Wesley reached Bristol the wisdom of the London Conference decision was confirmed. The argument concerning the capacity of the 'old room' scarcely affected the question. The building was in a dangerous condition and was ready to fall on the heads of the worshippers. But the large increase of the hearers in a 'field' was quickly evidenced.

On Tuesday evening, June 23, we see John Wesley in the

[1] John Wesley says that the Conference closed on Saturday, June 20. We have no record of the business transacted after Thursday of that week.

[2] *W.H.S. Publications*, No. 1, 48.

open air standing in the presence of a great multitude of rich and poor people. He says, in his *Journal*, 'We had a solemn and a joyful hour. Surely, these fields are white unto the harvest.' He was in a new preaching-place. He had taken his stand on Kingsdown in the 'Old Orchard,' a spot familiar to the citizens of Bristol. On that June evening, when he preached there, it must have acquired an additional charm. As he walked down the hill after the service, and looked at the landscape, in which gardens and orchards greeted his eye, he would rejoice in the beauty of the Broadmead valley. The 'Old Orchard' was one of George Fox's preaching-places. He stood on a stone which was long known as 'The Quaker's Stone.'

Wesley reached Exeter on June 24, having ridden there through storms of rain. While his clothes were drying he took the opportunity of writing *A Word to a Freeholder*. The country was on the eve of an election, and the prevalence of bribery was a crying scandal. The Wesleys attacked this evil with all their might. In addition to this written protest we know that about this time Charles Wesley expelled a member of Society who had taken a bribe for his vote. After recording the fact, he says, 'I hope there is not another like offender in all our Societies.'[1] The leaflet that John Wesley wrote in Exeter was published in 1748, and was used in other elections.

Casting a forward look, we wonder if Wesley, when he was in Exeter, heard anything concerning the new Bishop. In following the story of the introduction of Methodism into Exeter we have been impressed by the fact that, under the rule of Bishop Nicholas Claggett, the Methodists, so far as we know, had exceptional opportunities for preaching the gospel to the citizens. He was a man who preached sound and practical sermons, and was not likely to be a violent opponent of the new evangelists. His successor was Dr. George Lavington, who will claim our attention at a later stage.

On his way to Cornwall Wesley preached at Plymouth Dock, where he was disturbed by a mob, but when he came to St. Ives, on June 30, he found a welcome which sharply contrasted with some of his previous experiences. He walked to the church to attend morning prayers, and no one shouted a derisive 'Huzza.' He says, 'How strangely has one year

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i. 453.

changed the scene in Cornwall! This is now a peaceable, nay, honourable station. They give us good words almost in every place. What have we done, that the world should be so civil to us?' The next day was the eve of the election, and Wesley spoke severally to all the Methodists who had votes. He was delighted to find that not one would even eat or drink at the expense of him for whom he voted. Bribes had been offered and had been returned. He remained in Cornwall nearly a month. He found that although a mob here and there threatened him, the assaults were comparatively trivial. The heart had been wellnigh taken out of his adversaries. When preaching at Camborne, he looked about for John Rogers, the champion, who had so often sworn that Wesley should never more preach in that parish. He afterwards learned that Rogers had given up his opposition, saying, 'One may as well blow against the wind.' On Thursday, July 9, Wesley met the stewards of all the Societies, and made special inquiries about the exhorters. He found there were no less than eighteen of these workers in the county. Five he set aside as lacking either 'gifts or grace.' Three he specially approved, they having been much blessed in the work. The rest he considered might be helpful when there was no preacher in their own or the neighbouring societies, provided they would take no steps without the advice of those who had more experience than themselves. Being well satisfied with the condition of affairs in Cornwall, he left the county, and on Sunday evening, August 2, he preached once more in Bristol, in the 'Old Orchard,' to the largest congregation which, so far as he could remember, he had ever seen in that city. It was well that he was so enheartened by his visit to the West of England, for on his return he found himself face to face with an enterprise that called for the exercise of all his wisdom and courage.

IV

IRELAND

On Thursday, May 15, 1746, the following question was asked in the Conference which met in Bristol: 'What is a sufficient call of Providence to a new place—suppose Edinburgh or Dublin?' The answer was: '(1) An invitation from some one that is worthy, from a serious man, fearing God, who has a house to receive us; (2) A probability of doing more good by going thither than by staying longer where we are.' So far as Scotland was concerned, those conditions were not fulfilled for some years; but at the London Conference of 1747 there is an entry in the *Minutes* which indicates that the call to Ireland was increasing in clearness. At the foot of 'the stations' Ireland appears for the first time. Jonathan Reeves and John Trembath are appointed; but the words *Deo volente* appear in connexion with their appointment. The words indicate the provisional character of the arrangement; it is further shown by the fact that Reeves and Trembath are also appointed to other circuits. These entries excite our curiosity, and we must search for light which will reveal their meaning.[1]

In attempting to describe the origin of Methodism in Ireland we must not overlook the fact that in 1738, when Whitefield returned from Georgia, he landed in Ireland, and preached in the cathedral at Limerick at the request of Bishop Burscough. That was on Sunday, November 20. Three days later he arrived in Dublin. He called on Dr. Delany, who received him with the greatest kindness. He introduced him to the Bishop of Londonderry and the Archbishop of Armagh, both of whom invited him to dinner. He also preached in St. Werburgh's and in St. Andrew's, two of the

[1] In all matters that concern Methodism in Ireland the late Rev. C. H. Crookshank's *History* is an admirable guide. For our immediate purpose we shall frequently avail ourselves of the facts recorded in his book on *Wesley and his Times*. It is the first of three excellent volumes.

Dublin churches.[1] The cordiality of his reception must have made a deep impression on him after his rough and perilous voyage. It may have had a decisive effect on some of his subsequent actions, but in our opinion it is wiser to look in another direction for the origin of Methodism in Ireland.

In 1745 a soldier had formed a small Society in Dublin. Our knowledge of him is slight; he belongs to the little band of devout soldiers who at that time did so much to secure the success of the Evangelical Revival. Not content with meeting the members of the Society, he began to preach to them. At this point Mr. Benjamin La Trobe, a Baptist, having finished his studies at the University of Glasgow, came to Dublin, and was made the leader of this Society. In June, 1746, John Cennick, so well known to all who are acquainted with the early history of the Methodist Church, came to Dublin, and began to preach in a chapel in Skinner's Alley, which had been hired from the Baptists. Cennick had been one of Wesley's lay preachers; he then joined Whitefield; and at the time of his visit to Dublin he was a Moravian. His preaching in the chapel in the alley was very successful. The place was crowded with hearers, and a large addition was made to the membership of the Society. We get a glimpse of one of his services. It was probably held on Christmas Day. In the course of his sermon he referred to 'the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,' and a priest in the congregation cried out that the preacher was 'a swaddler.' The retort suited the taste of some who were present. The nickname became popular with the mob, and at a subsequent stage the Methodists in Ireland were known by it for many years. At the close of 1746 John Cennick left Dublin. Following the longing of his heart, he went to the Moravian settlement in Germany. We do not know how far Wesley was acquainted with the events which had taken place in Dublin, but certain entries in the *Minutes* of the Conference in 1746 and 1747 suggest that he had some knowledge of them.

In a preceding volume we have had to describe the unsatisfactory conduct of Thomas Williams, a man who had almost exhausted the extraordinary patience of John Wesley. Mr. Crookshank's description of him is correct. He was a member of a respectable Welsh family. Having received a good

[1] See Tyerman's *Life of Whitefield*, i. 146.

education, he had graduated at one of the Universities. He was a man of attractive appearance, and had a pleasing manner. He was most acceptable as a preacher. But he had fatal defects of character. He was ambitious, impatient of control, unstable in his religious views, and 'sadly lacking in high moral principle.'[1] Notwithstanding these defects, some of which were revealed with startling clearness in the process of the years, it cannot be denied that in 1747 he rendered a great service to Methodism. In the summer of that year he went to Dublin and preached in the open air. It is probable that his first sermon was delivered on Oxmantown Green. It was a place of public resort, and on Sundays and holy days numbers of people were accustomed to gather there. The Royal barracks contributed their contingent of soldiers to the crowds. It was just the spot on which a fervent evangelist would desire to take his stand. In addition to his open-air work Williams preached in a house situated at the corner of Marlborough and Talbot Streets. It had been part of a Lutheran church. The first Lutheran congregation in Dublin was formed by Esdras Marcus Lightenstone, who in 1689 was ordained as chaplain to the Duke of Brandenburgh's regiment, then in Ireland. At the conclusion of the Peace of Ryswick, in 1697, the regiment was disbanded. Lightenstone remained in Dublin, and gathered together a congregation in Marlborough Street. About 1725 the Lutherans moved to Poolbeg Street, where a new church and manse were built. Whitelaw, in his *History of Dublin*, says that 'the cause was small, and ultimately disappeared.'[2] The 'room' in Marlborough Street in which Williams preached had accommodation for about four hundred people, but four or five times that number could stand in the spacious yard. As the result of his preaching a Society was soon formed. One of its earliest members was Mr. William Lunell, a Moravian, who resided in Francis Street. He was a descendant from a Huguenot family, and possessed great influence in Dublin. He was a member of the banking firm of Lunell & Dickson, which failed owing to the 'run' upon it in 1745, the year of the Young Pretender's invasion. But in October of that year an advertisement appeared in the Dublin

[1] Crookshank's *History*, i. 14.
[2] See *W.H.S. Proceedings*, v. 68.

newspapers bearing the signatures of a great number of the chief city merchants, who guaranteed the notes and bills of the bank, and the crisis was surmounted. That guarantee indicates the esteem in which the bankers were held.[1]

It is difficult to define the precise position of Thomas Williams at the time of his visit to Ireland in the summer of 1747. He had pursued an erratic course. He had been sometimes in close association with the Wesleys; then, early in 1743, he was appointed by Whitefield as the superintendent of his Societies in the Vale of Glamorgan and in part of Monmouthshire; three months later he was present at the Conference of the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales. In 1744 he returned to the Wesleys and caused them great trouble; but, after confessing his fault he was again employed by them.[2] He may have been in association with them in 1747, but his name does not appear in the list of lay preachers in the Bennet *Minutes* for that year. Whatever may have been his position, we know that he wrote to John Wesley and gave him an account of the progress of the work he was doing in Dublin. Wesley at once saw his opportunity; and on August 4 he left Bristol for Holyhead. On August 8, he and his companions—John Trembath and William Tucker, lay preachers—embarked on board the packet-boat for Ireland.

On Sunday morning, August 10, John Wesley landed at St. George's Quay in Dublin. Soon he heard the bells ringing for church, and immediately answered their call. Mr. Lunell had intended to meet him at the Quay, but arrived too late. After the service he called at the house where Wesley had left his baggage and took him to his own home. In the afternoon Wesley wrote a note to the curate of St. Mary's, Moses Rouquier, who sent word that he would be glad of his assistance. He went to St. Mary's and preached to as gay and senseless a congregation as he had ever seen. The next day he met the Society at Marlborough Street at five o'clock in the morning, and at six he preached there on 'Repent and believe the gospel.' The room, large as it was, would not contain the people. He was delighted with the attention of those whom he addressed. Between eight and nine o'clock he went to see Mr. Rouquier, in accordance with the arrangement they had

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv. 87.

[2] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 228–229.

made on the preceding day. The curate of St. Mary's was profuse in his expressions of goodwill. He highly commended the sermon Wesley had preached, but, during their conversation, he candidly expressed the most rooted prejudice against lay preachers, or preaching out of a church, and said 'the Archbishop of Dublin was resolved to suffer no such irregularities in his diocese.' It was an honest utterance, and we know how Wesley would receive it. He had grown accustomed to such declarations on the part of clergymen; but 'the expression of goodwill,' and the 'commendation' of his sermon, were new accompaniments to the ordinary outbursts of the English clergy. On the same morning he went to wait on the Archbishop, but found he had gone out of town. In the evening Wesley preached again in the Marlborough Street room. Many of the rich, and many ministers of every denomination, were there. His comment on the service was: 'If my brother or I could have been here for a few months, I question if there might not have been a larger Society here than even in London itself.' The next day he waited on the Archbishop at Newbridge, a place about ten miles from Dublin, and had a conversation with him which lasted two or three hours. He answered an 'abundance of objections,' and seems to have been satisfied with the result of the interview.

Wesley purposely delayed the examination of the Society in Dublin until Monday, August 17. He finished it the next day, and found that it contained about two hundred and eighty members, 'many of whom appeared to be strong in the faith.' Before commencing the examination he had taken care at his morning services to explain the 'Rules of the United Societies.' He took a few sections at a time, and caused the people to understand the conditions of admission into the Society and of continued membership. He admired intelligent enthusiasm, he rejoiced in great accessions, but, as we know, he never was blinded by the glamour of numbers. In the mass he constantly observed the individual. What he prized was the consistency of each member. In that fact may be found the secret of the strict discipline that governed the Methodist Societies. It was well that he took pains to explain the reasons for the adoption of the 'Rules,' for the Dublin Society was soon to feel the scourge of sharp persecution.

John Wesley's first visit to Ireland lasted until August 23.

During that time he made mental notes of the religious condition of Dublin; and, by conversation, reading, and observation, he was able to arrive at certain conclusions concerning the state of the country. It has been estimated that the population of Ireland in 1754 amounted to 2,372,634 persons. For purposes of comparison we may say that in 1751 the estimated population of England and Wales was 6,467,000, and of Scotland 1,255,663. These figures cannot be absolutely relied on, but they serve a useful purpose. Carrying his investigations into the sphere of religion, John Wesley came to the conclusion that at least ninety-nine in a hundred of the native Irish remained in the religion of their forefathers. Confronting this fact, he says: 'Nor is it any wonder that those who are born Papists generally live and die such, when the Protestants can find no better ways to convert them than Penal Laws and Acts of Parliament.' In the light of the present day this opinion has exceptional significance. It is clear that during his short visit Wesley reflected on the difficulties of the coming campaign, and that he did not make up his mind to commence his mission to the Irish people without surveying the ground and counting the cost. But from his experiences at Osmotherley and Hainton he knew that it was possible to win the attention of Roman Catholics to the great doctrines of the gospel. As for the Protestants, his success among crowds of Englishmen gave him the assurance that Irishmen could be reached and affected. And so, in reliance on the power of the Spirit of God, he determined that he would arrange for the continuance of the work which had been so successfully commenced in Dublin.

John Wesley's voyage back to England was hindered by 'a dead calm.' Starting on August 23, he did not get within sight of Wales until three days afterwards. He had written twice to Charles Wesley, who was taking care of the London and Bristol Societies, urging on him the need of his presence in Ireland. An appointment to meet at Garth was arranged. No pleasanter place could have been chosen. Charles Wesley arrived there first, he and Charles Perronet being received by 'the whole family as messengers of God.' On August 29, while the members of the happy company in Mr. Gwynne's home were talking together, and wondering what had become of John Wesley, he walked in 'and brought life and a blessing

with him.' Picturing the scene of that reception, two figures make a quiet appeal to us. We see Charles Wesley, and, near him, Miss Sarah Gwynne, the beautiful daughter of the house. As we look at them our thoughts fly through the years that were before them. We think of their long companionship, their perfect love, the sunshine and the shadows that fell on their path, and we are not surprised that it was not until September 9 that Charles Wesley and Charles Perronet arrived in Dublin.

The 'dead calm' that delayed the voyage of John Wesley to Wales was not a prophecy of the continuance of summer weather in the Dublin Society. No Church has ever been firmly rooted without storms. When we walk through the woodlands in spring we pause for a while to brood over the fact that much of their beauty is the result of the shaking of the winds of winter. The withered leaves and the broken branches at our feet have their lesson. He must know little of the history of the Christian Churches who fails to recognize that those which wear an aspect of the greatest strength and grandeur have been searched again and again by the tempests of persecution.

When Charles Wesley landed in Dublin he found that the storm had commenced. John Wesley writes enthusiastically about the Irish people whom he met on his first visit. But an Irishman would be the first to admit that in the mass of the population of his country in the eighteenth century many were to be found who were unworthy of John Wesley's eulogium. We will let Mr. Crookshank speak of the inhabitants of Dublin at the time of the first visits of the Wesleys. He says:

> The city had been long remarkable for its lawlessness. Robberies and murders were frequently committed in the streets. The butchers of Ormond market, and the weavers of the Liberty, would sometimes meet, and fight until one or more persons were killed. On one occasion a constable was beaten to death in the open streets and the body hung up in triumph, yet no one was called to account for it. The magistrates were weak and inefficient, and consequently their authority was despised.[1]

There were two mobs in Dublin, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant, and both of them became assailants of the

[1] *History of Methodism*, i. 17.

Methodists. One Sunday evening, before Charles Wesley's arrival, they seem to have arranged their differences and united in an assault on the house where the Society met. As the members came out they were attacked with sticks and stones. Several of the Methodists were knocked down and beaten, while others retreated to the room. The mob then broke open the door, tore down the desk, the forms, and wainscoting, and carried them into the street and burnt them. They then broke into and ransacked a warehouse over the preaching-room, stole about one hundred pound's worth of goods, and committed the remainder to the flames. Watching this scene of tumult, we notice a coach drawing up and stopping. Young ladies are in it who, looking at the fire, ask 'What is the matter?' Someone answers, 'It is only a mob pulling down the swaddling-house and burning the pulpit and benches in the street.' Then one of the ladies cries, 'Ah! I am glad of that; I hope these false prophets will now be driven out of the kingdom. If they would only try to do some good to the poor, ignorant Papists they might be borne with; but to think of their assurance in pretending to instruct good Protestants, when we have everything we can wish for in our own Church—it is intolerable.' In justice to the speaker it is right to say that shortly afterwards she became a well-known Methodist in Athlone.

At last the Lord Mayor appeared on the scene with his guard. When he saw the havoc that had been made he readily granted warrants for the apprehension of the rioters. He was laughed at for his interference. Some of the mob were imprisoned, but when the time for trial came the Grand Jury threw out the bills, and the Methodists were abandoned to the fury of their persecutors. John Trembath, writing to John Wesley after describing the riots said that, with few exceptions, the Society, which numbered three hundred and eighty-six members, stood firm. As to the preachers, he declared, 'No one is fit to be a preacher here who is not ready to die at any moment.' Preachers and people were animated by the same spirit; they faced the storm with unwavering courage.

When Charles Wesley and Charles Perronet landed in Dublin they found themselves in a hostile city; but the former was a veteran soldier, and the latter had received his 'baptism of fire.' We expect that thoughts of Garth and

Shoreham were often in their minds, but the great cry of a multitude that needed Christ and His gospel triumphed over the voices that whispered of ease and loving friends. They put on the armour and went to the fight. On September 9 they walked in the evening to the shattered room in Marlborough Street, where a few people were met 'who did not fear what men or devils could do unto them.' Charles Wesley preached on 'Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith the Lord.' His words strengthened the resolution of the hearers. In his conversation with them he learned the particulars of the riot. The account was sufficiently illustrated by the ruins that lay around him. When the little company left the building they found themselves in the midst of a gibing and threatening crowd. Charles Wesley says, 'The Popish mob, encouraged and assisted by the Protestant, are so insolent and outrageous that, whatever street we pass through, it is up in arms. The Mayor would assist us, but cannot.'

On Sunday, September 13, Charles Wesley did a daring thing. He was rewarded for his courage. He went to Oxmantown Green, and preached there morning and evening. In the morning he stood under the wall of the barracks and preached 'Christ crucified.' The Wesleys' influence over soldiers was remarkable; the best of them admired their heroism and constantly defended them. In Dublin at that time the officers were opposed to Charles Wesley, and forbade the soldiers to attend the services; but the attraction of the preacher was strong and, in many cases, proved irresistible. In the evening thousands of people assembled on the Green. Some of the Roman Catholics raged and shouted and threw stones, but Charles Wesley's bold experiment succeeded. His appeals to Protestants and Romanists prevailed. During the week the news of the throwing out of the bills against the rioters by the Grand Jury became known, but Charles Wesley, nothing daunted, walked to the Green on Sunday, September 20, and preached there morning and afternoon. The promise of success brightened in the morning, the power of God was present, keeping down all opposition. The preacher found his way to the hearts of the Roman Catholics. Urging the need of repentance, and declaring the love of Christ, he quoted in support of his teaching the words of Thomas à Kempis and of the Roman Liturgy. The eyes of the Romanists

were fixed on him. Many were in tears. As we listen to that far-off voice strange thoughts arise in our mind. A scene quietly depicted by Miss Margaret Stokes shines before us. She has told us of St. Deicola, the friend of St. Columban at Bangor, in Down. Columban had a great love for him, but he was perplexed by his wonderful cheerfulness. One day he said to Deicola, 'How does it happen that your face is always shining with joy, and nothing seems to trouble your soul?' And Deicola answered, 'It is because nothing can ever part me from my God.'[1] Charles Wesley told the secret of the same assurance and radiant peace to the crowd on Oxmantown Green; and, when the Roman Catholics listened to words of Thomas à Kempis which set forth the eternal love of God, they 'listened with strained attention.' Their surprise was increased when they heard the preacher advising the congregation to go to their respective places of worship. In the evening there was a great multitude of serious hearers at the service on the Green. They clustered around the preacher. Those who did not wish to hear withdrew on every side to the opposite hill, where they sat down in rows on the grass and remained the whole time of the service. When Wesley had gone, a Popish mob gathered and began to abuse the women; but the soldiers interfered and beat off the assailants, who retreated, with the threat that they would come with all their forces the next Sunday. The threat was not carried out. Wesley says, 'Never have I seen a quieter congregation at the Foundery than we had at the Green, both morning and afternoon. Many of the soldiers were within hearing, though behind the doors and walls, for fear of their officers. The Papists stood like lambs. I quoted Kempis, which makes some of them confident I am a good Catholic.'[2]

It was the custom of the Wesleys, when preaching in the open air, to advise the people to attend their own places of worship, and we have seen that this advice was given by Charles Wesley to the crowd assembled on Oxmantown Green. He set an example by leading the Methodists to St. Patrick's; but their attendance was strongly resented by the clergy and the congregation. There was one exception. The Dean, Francis Corbet, welcomed them heartily. Charles Wesley says, 'He has always treated us with great courtesy;

[1] *Three Months in the Forests of France*, 41. [2] *Journal*, i. 461.

looks pleased to see us make the bulk of the communicants; appointed us a seat by ourselves; and constantly administers to me first, as the rubric directs.[1] Dean Corbet's example did not improve the manners of the clergy and officers of the Church. Charles Wesley declares that he seldom entered the place without feeling that they were ready to drag him out as a profaner of the temple. On one occasion he had to hear a sermon directed against the Methodists. As he listened to a discourse, 'full of low, pitiful lies and nonsense,' he was reminded of 'the ingenious Mr. Hoblyn,' the Cornish preacher, who, until that moment, had occupied in his estimation the chief place among the pulpit-vituperators of the Methodists.[2]

It speaks well for the good temper of Charles Wesley and the Dublin Methodists that they continued to attend the services and the Sacraments at St. Patrick's; but they did not overlook the fact that it would be a great advantage if they could secure a preaching-house in which they might carry on the work of the growing Society. The dilapidated room in Marlborough Street was not suitable. On September 29 the way seemed to open. Charles Wesley met the landlord of Cennick's preaching-house, who told him that he was about to raise the rent, and asked if the Methodists would take the room if the present tenants refused to pay the sum he required. The arrangement made was that the present tenants were to have the first offer; if they did not accept it, then the Methodists were to have 'the next refusal.' Mr. Crookshank shall guide us through the proceedings which concern another attempt to secure a preaching-house. He says:

> At this period the Earl of Meath's Liberty was apparently the most flourishing and wealthiest part of the city, owing principally to the cotton, silk, and broad-cloth weaving, as well as the tanning and leather-dressing trades in that locality. Education and religion amongst the workpeople were altogether neglected or ignored, and immorality existed to an alarming extent. Prize- and cock-fighting, card-playing, drunkenness, and other vices abounded. The employers complained bitterly, but felt quite helpless to improve the moral condition of the workmen. Just then a party of Methodists waited on them to request that Mr. C. Wesley should be afforded an opportunity of preaching to the weavers; and they not only consented, but also expressed their

[1] *Journal*, i. 463. [2] For Mr. Hoblyn see *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 140.

willingness to afford every assistance in their power. There was a large building in Cork Street, where the looms were kept, called ' The Weavers' Store,' which could accommodate about five hundred persons, and it was arranged that this should be cleared out for the service. On the day appointed hundreds assembled; but the half of those who came could not get into the room. When C. Wesley arrived they gave him a hearty reception, and behaved with all due respect. He was surrounded by a large number of the members of Society, and, after singing and prayer, announced as his text, ' How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? ' The poor weavers were greatly broken down, and a deep impression was made on all who heard. Before the congregation dispersed it was intimated that C. Wesley would preach again in a few days in an adjacent field; at which meeting several thousands were present, and were most orderly and attentive. A check was thus given to the sinful habits of the people, many of whom subsequently became Methodists. Thus encouraged, C. Wesley purchased a room in that neighbourhood called ' Dolphin's Barn,' now known as 104 Cork Street. The whole ground floor, which had been a weaver's shop, was forty-two feet long and twenty-four broad, and was turned into a preaching-room, with two rows of benches and a pulpit at the end, while the preachers were accommodated in the rooms above.[1]

In Charles Wesley's *Journal* we see that on Saturday, October 17, he passed the day at the new house. The conditions under which he and Charles Perronet had previously lived in Dublin, had become intolerable; and the change was heartily welcomed by them. On Sunday, October 25, Charles Wesley opened the house at Dolphin's Barn by preaching to a great multitude within and without.[2] The purchase of the new house was not completed until John Wesley had been consulted. Charles Wesley also wrote to Mr. Blackwell, the London banker, that staunch friend of the Wesleys, who so often helped them when money was needed to assist them in their evangelizing enterprises. Charles Wesley also went about Dublin collecting subscriptions towards the expense of the purchase, alterations, and furnishing of the Dolphin's Barn ' Room.' He stayed in Ireland until March 20, 1748, and during his wisely prolonged visit he and his companions laid there the firm foundations of a church that has deeply affected the spiritual life, not only of this country, but of lands that lie far beyond our narrow seas.

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism*, i. 20–21.

[2] On October 31 Charles Wesley preached, as he thought for the last time, at Marlborough Street; but Mr. Crookshank says that, when better days arrived, the Methodists appear to have regained possession of their old room.

V

A NEW ROOM IN BRISTOL

On February 9, 1748, we see John Wesley in Bristol. About sixty members of the Society had assembled to meet him, and we listen with great interest to their earnest conversation. It concerns the 'Room' he built in 1739. It was in a dangerous condition. Describing it, John Wesley says, 'There was no small danger of its falling upon our heads.' The successful work of nine years rendered it imperative that it should be enlarged. The result of the conversation was an agreement that the necessary alterations should be made. Collectors were appointed who, in two or three days, obtained £230 from subscribers. Experienced builders were engaged to make an estimate of the probable expense; and Wesley appointed five stewards, in addition to those of the Society, to superintend the work of reconstruction. The appointment of this building committee is significant. Wesley had borne the financial responsibility connected with the erection of the original room; but since then he had seen the wisdom of adopting the principle of 'devolution' in the management of the 'temporal affairs' of the Societies. He had found that when laymen were willing to share the load he had carried they did him most helpful service.

It is possible, with the aid of the old deeds and documents relating to the 'Room,' and of the references in John and Charles Wesley's *Journals*, to follow the proceedings of the local committee.[1] The stewards had to face two questions; first, the enlargement of the room; and, secondly, the instability of the original structure. The first difficulty was met by the purchase, in John Wesley's name, of a house and garden which are described in a deed dated June 8, 1748, as

[1] The deeds are now in the possession of the Wesleyan Conference Office, City Road, London. They were formerly in private hands, and were then used by me when writing an article on 'The New Room in the Horsefair,' which appeared in *The Methodist Recorder* on November 3, 1898.

being 'contiguous to a certain room commonly called Mr. Wesley's Room, or the New Room.' By this purchase the required space for enlargement was secured. As to the strengthening of the original structure, the stewards were embarrassed by the fact that the new plans arranged for the erection of a dwelling-house over the 'Room.' Would the walls of the 'Old Room' bear the weight? That question must have been discussed by the 'experienced builders.' They could adapt the walls of 'the extension' to the new burden, but it was improbable that they could put much trust in the walls of a building that was 'in danger of falling on the heads of the people.' What was to be done? Some portion of the old walls may have been sound, and might be spared; but it is certain that the stewards determined to change the size and appearance of the building.[1] When it was completed the preaching-room contained twice as many people as the original room. Its value had been largely increased. The amount of the insurance on the 'Old Room' had been £300, but the new policy of insurance, dated December 21, 1748, was for £500, or nearly double the original sum. The insurers are Thomas Richards and other feoffees, and in the policy the premises are described as 'their New Room in the Horsefair, in the parish of St. James, in the City of Bristol, commonly known by the name of the Meeting, belonging to John Westley, clerk; with a Dwelling-house over it, being built with stone, and covered with tile, in the occupation of the said John Westley, clerk.' That is an accurate description of the room erected in 1748. The previous policy of insurance effected with the Bristol Crown Fire Office, dated May 16, 1740, describes the original 'Room' as 'a dwelling-house, school, and Society room, all under one roof, and another small schoolroom adjoining thereto.' If we compare the two descriptions we shall have some idea of the change effected in 1748 in the Bristol 'Room.'

The advocate of the theory that when the alterations were made in 1748 the 'Old Room' was left practically intact will have to face the question why the Wesleys did not hold services in it when they visited Bristol at intervals between February and September, 1748. The 'Old Orchard' was

[1] The Rev. Henry J. Foster, one of our acutest Methodist antiquaries, thought he could detect remains of the old walls in a part of the present building.

used on several occasions, and great crowds assembled there. It is true that on Sunday, July 24, Charles Wesley preached twice in the ' Room ' ; but he expressly says that the services were held in ' the shell of our house.' The unfinished building was in a condition that made it possible for a service to be held in it on a summer day ; but Charles Wesley's description is fatal to the theory that the ' Room ' John Wesley built in 1739 had been preserved intact.

It was not until Tuesday, September 13, 1748, that John Wesley saw the reconstructed ' House.' In one part of his *Journal* he merely says, ' I preached in the new-built room at Bristol.' During the time when the Standard *Journal* was being published some fragments of a manuscript *Journal*, from which Wesley made selections for publication, were discovered. In the final volume of the present edition of the *Journal* these fragments are printed, and in them we find an expression of Wesley's opinion of the alterations made in the Bristol ' Room.' He says,

> I preached in the new-built room, which is indeed an awful place, and contains nearly twice as many people as it did before. At five in the morning there was such a congregation there as I never saw before in a morning at Bristol. After preaching I talked with the stewards of the building : men whose hearts God had prepared for the work. They have expended all the money they had received, and about a hundred pounds more. But they are not discouraged, believing He will provide, whose is the earth and the fullness thereof.[1]

It must be remembered that at the beginning of February £230 had been contributed to the building fund. This sum, and all that had been raised from February to September, had been spent, and £100 of debt remained. When we consider the value of money in the eighteenth century, and the price of labour, we get some idea of the extent of the alterations made in ' the new-built ' house.

One incident in connexion with the new house in Bristol calls for special notice. We are not able to indicate the person with whom the idea originated, but it is clear that some of the Bristol Methodists came to the conclusion that, for the protection of the worshippers in the new building, the provisions contained in the eighteenth and nineteenth clauses of the

[1] See Standard *Journal*, viii. 159.

Act of Toleration, passed in 1689, should be observed, and that the 'New Room' should be registered. The defence afforded by the eighteenth clause was needed for the protection of the building and its congregation. This clause enacted

> that if any person or persons, at any time or times after the tenth day of June, do and shall willingly, and of purpose, maliciously or contemptuously come into any cathedral or parish church, chapel, or other congregation permitted by this Act, and disquiet or disturb the same, or misuse any preacher or teacher, such person or persons, upon proof thereof before any Justice of Peace, by two or more sufficient witnesses, shall find two sureties, to be bound by recognizance in the penal sum of fifty pounds, and, in default of such sureties, shall be committed to prison, there to remain till the next general or quarter sessions; and upon conviction of the said offence, at the said quarter sessions, shall suffer the pain and penalty of twenty pounds, to the use of the King's and Queen's Majesties, their heirs and successors.

There can be no doubt that the words 'or other congregation permitted by this Act' referred to a congregation of 'their Majesties' Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England,' as indicated in the title of the Act. But to an ingenious mind the scope of the nineteenth clause seemed wider. It stands as follows:

> Provided always that no congregation or assembly for religious worship shall be permitted or allowed by this Act, until the place of such meeting shall be certified to the bishop of the diocese, or to the archdeacon of that archdeaconry, or to the justices of the peace at the general or quarter sessions of the peace for the county, city, or place in which such meeting shall be held, and registered in the said bishop's or archdeacon's court respectively, or recorded at the said general or quarter sessions; the register, or clerk of the peace whereof respectively, is hereby required to register the same, and to give certificate thereof to such person as shall demand the same, for which there shall be no greater fee nor reward taken than the sum of sixpence.

A broad interpretation of the nineteenth clause seemed to make it imperative that the 'New Room' should be 'certified,' inasmuch as 'no congregation or assembly for religious worship was to be permitted or allowed until the place of such meeting was duly recorded.' Conforming to the directions of the Act, Thomas Richards, one of Wesley's well-known lay preachers, who was a trustee of the Bristol 'Room' and of the Orphan House at Newcastle, appeared

in the Bristol court of quarter sessions and certified that the 'New Room' was a place for religious worship. The justices directed that the fact should be 'recorded,' and a certificate of the record, signed by the Clerk of the Peace, was given. So far as we know, that was the first occasion on which a request for the registration of a Methodist preaching-house was made. It will be of interest, therefore, if we reproduce a copy of the certificate that was granted.[1]

City of Bristol and County of the same City } *to wit*

At an adjournment of the Court of General Quarter Sessions of the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King held in and for the said City and County in the Guild-hall there on Monday the seventeenth day of October One thousand seven hundred and forty eight before Buckler Weekes Esquire Mayor of the said City Jacob Elton Nathaniel Day and Edward Cooper Esquires Aldermen of the same City and others their associated Justices

Thomas Richards one of the Trustees of a House or Room lately re-built and commonly called the New Room[2] situate in or near the Horse fair in the parish of St. James within the said City of Bristol came into this Court and certified unto the Justices above named that the said House or Room called the New Room was also a place of meeting of a Congregation or Assembly for Religious Worship conformable to the Statute made in the first year of the reign of the late King William and Queen Mary intituled an Act for Exempting their Majesties Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain Laws and prayed that the said place might be so recorded among the Records of this Court and the same is recorded accordingly

By order of the Court.

When we examine the certificate we find that at least one person seems to have resented the action of Thomas Richards. On the back of the document some one has written the following words in capital letters: 'I protest against this needless, useless, and senseless licence.' Then, still in capitals, the name 'Charles Wesley' is added. Those who are acquainted with his clear and beautiful handwriting will be astonished at the style of this uncouth inscription. It does not bear any resemblance to Charles Wesley's ordinary writing. We do not

[1] The original is in the Wesleyan Conference Office, City Road, London.

[2] The words 'a House or Room lately re-built and commonly called the New Room,' settle a long-continued controversy. See John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 376, 377, *note*.

know when, and by whom, the endorsement was made, but it is possible that it expresses Charles Wesley's private opinion.

At a later stage we shall have to deal with the important question of the registration of Methodist preaching-houses. At this point it will be enough to say that John Wesley was soon obliged to face it. He watched the course of events; and, during the troubled times that followed the action of Thomas Richards, he was compelled to guard his people, in some places, against the attacks made on the preaching-houses in which they assembled for public worship. It was not until November 3, 1787, that he was thoroughly convinced, during a conversation with Mr. Clulow, his solicitor, that it was the safest way to 'license' not a few, but all his chapels.[1] During the interval between 1750 and 1787 some of them had been registered, not only with his consent, but by his advice. In proof of this fact we will quote a letter he wrote to Samuel Wells, one of his lay preachers, on January 28, 1779. Samuel Wells was appointed to Tiverton at the Conference of 1778, and had made an application to the Justices for the registration of a chapel. They refused to grant it, and so he reported the matter to John Wesley, who sent him the following letter:

According to the Act of Toleration: 1. You are required to certify to the Registrar of the Bishop's Court, or the Justices, the place of your meeting for divine worship. This is all you have to do. You ask nothing at all of the Bishop or Justices. 2. The Registrar, or Clerk of the Court, is 'required to register the same, and to give a certificate thereof to such persons as shall demand the same; for which there shall be no greater fee or reward taken than sixpence.'

I advise you to go once more to the Sessions, and say, 'Gentlemen, we have had advice from London. We desire nothing at all from you; but we demand of your Clerk to register this place, and to give us a certificate thereof; or to answer the refusal at his peril.' Answer no questions to Justices or Lawyers, but with a bow, and with repeating the words, 'Our business is only with your Clerk. We demand of him what the Act requires of him to do.' If you judge proper, you may show this to any of the Justices. What I have written I am ready to defend.

P.S.—You led the Justices into the mistake by your manner of addressing them. Beware of this for the time to come; you have nothing to ask of them.[2]

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, vii. 339. [2] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 496–497.

Wesley evidently was quoting words which had been given to him by a competent lawyer. The subject will have to be treated more fully when we describe the events of later years. In the meanwhile we must be content with saying that it was soon seen that the registration of Methodist preaching-houses was far from being 'needless, useless, and senseless.'

VI

THE MISSION TO IRELAND

We must now return to Ireland, where we left Charles Wesley and Charles Perronet at the opening of the year 1748. The question of acquiring the preaching-house in Skinner's Alley, from which the Moravian congregation had been ejected, had become urgent and had to be settled. On January 19 Charles Perronet told the Methodist Society that he intended to ask Cennick, who was then in Dublin, if he had any further pretensions to the 'House'; if not, then he said he would take it himself for the Methodists. He seems to have carried out his resolve without consulting Charles Wesley, who was much disturbed when he heard the news. On February 5 Charles Wesley had an interview with Cennick. Asking him if he had any hope of the 'House,' Cennick answered that he had none, and that he believed the trustees would never let it to the Moravians again. Charles Wesley, strongly sympathizing with him, promised that he should have the 'House' to preach in whenever he pleased. Cennick acknowledged his kindness, and assured him that he had acted fairly throughout the business.[1] By the acquisition of the Skinner's Alley Chapel the Methodists gained an important centre for their work in Dublin. The 'Winter Number' of *The Methodist Recorder* for 1904 contained an article by Mr. David B. Bradshaw, full of interesting particulars of the old 'preaching-house.' It stood about half a mile from the cathedral, in an alley which has become Newmarket Street. The old alley is described by Mr. Bradshaw as 'an obscure little lane which runs from the Coombe to Newmarket, so narrow that two vehicles can scarcely pass.' In this lane Mr. Bradshaw discovered the remains of an ancient building which, in his opinion, was the old Skinner's Alley Chapel. The chapel was given up in 1752, when a new 'House' was opened in Whitefriar Street.

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 1–2

Charles Wesley's visit to Ireland was prolonged from September 9, 1747 to March 20, 1748. For six months the Societies had the advantage of his supervision, and the lay preachers were inspired by his example as a fearless evangelist. It is no wonder that the foundations of Methodism in Ireland were firmly laid. Two incidents of his visit must be recorded.

Athlone occupies a distinguished position among the towns in Ireland which responded to the preaching of the first Methodist pioneers. A Society had been formed there, and the place, when Charles Wesley visited it, was an important centre of work. On Monday, February 8, Charles Wesley preached at Tyrrell's Pass, where a great reformation had been effected in the lives of people, some of whom had been 'wicked to a proverb.' Nearly one hundred members had been gathered into the Society, and Charles Wesley, when he preached to them, was greatly refreshed. The next day he rode seven miles to Templemacateer, the residence of Mr. Jonathan Handy, the brother of Mr. Samuel Handy, of Coolalough, in the parish of Ardnurcher, Westmeath. These two Irish gentlemen were prominent Methodists. On Wednesday, February 10, we see seven horsemen setting out from Mr. Jonathan Handy's house. We notice in the cavalcade Charles Wesley, the brothers Handy, their brother-in-law, Mr. Stephen Fouace, of Tyrrell's Pass, and John Healy, one of Wesley's lay preachers. We follow them as they ride along, Charles Wesley being a little in advance. They break the line now and then to allow people to pass who were running in great haste towards Athlone; especially when a man on horseback, riding at full speed, galloped in the same direction. The line was formed once more; they went on, singing hymns. When they got within half a mile of Athlone Samuel Handy and John Healy were in front. Mounting a little hill, three or four men appeared at the top and told the horsemen to go back. Charles Wesley and his companions thought they were jesting with them, and went on their way. Then suddenly they discovered that danger threatened them. Stones flew through the air; one of them struck John Healy with such violence that he fell from his horse and lay on the ground, 'without sense or motion.' Mr. Samuel Handy, setting spurs to his horse, charged through a group of five or six ruffians; then, wheeling round, he scattered them again; but from all sides men were

streaming towards the spot, intent on attacking the Methodists. The man who had knocked down John Healy determined to finish him ; he struck him on the face again and again with a club. Charles Wesley cried out against his brutality, and he ceased to batter the prostrate preacher. The assailants were soon reinforced. In preparation for the attack heaps of big stones had been gathered and piled at the roadside, and the crowd flung them at the Methodists with all their might. One hit Charles Wesley on the back and knocked the breath out of him. Another struck Mr. Fouace on the head ; but Mr. Handy marked the man who had flung it and rode at him, knocked him down, and disabled him for a time. This departure from the practice of ' passive resistance ' seems to have had some effect ; but the flight of big stones still continued, and the question of the advisability of returning home was discussed. But Charles Wesley asked if they were to leave John Healy ' in the hands of his murderers ' ; that ended the discussion. They had been driven back down the hill, but they returned to ' the field of battle.' Then they found that the Roman Catholic contingent of the rioters had retreated because their Protestant comrades had risen against them.

This miserable scene is not without its touches of light. When John Healy was stunned and fell on the ground, the man who had disabled him drew his knife and prepared to complete the murder. He was the Roman Catholic priest's servant, and had ridden to the fray on his master's horse. The secret of the sudden rising of the Roman Catholics against the Methodists is easily explained. The priest had delivered an altar harangue in which he had denounced the Methodists, and it is no wonder the servant's zeal was kindled. As he stood over Healy with his knife in his hand, a poor woman came out of her hut and stopped him. She swore that he should not ' cut up ' his victim. Arrested in his attempt, he picked up Healy's whip that lay on the ground and struck her with all his might. The blow half killed her, indeed, as Mr. Crookshank says, ' From the effects of it she afterwards died.' But she stood her ground until help came. A Protestant named Jameson ran up with a pitchfork and drove it into the clerk's shoulder. Wrenching it out, he struck him again ; but Mr. Handy came up, and probably saved ' his enemy's life.' The woman and her husband carried John Healy into

their hut, where Charles Wesley and his friends found him. At the sound of Wesley's voice the wounded man opened his eyes and recovered his senses. He was carried to Athlone, where a surgeon dressed his wounds, and 'took nothing for his pains.' We do not know the name of the valiant woman whose deed of kindness we have recorded. But in thinking of her we seem to see a ray of light that lingers on the hillside near Athlone.

If Charles Wesley had started from Templemacateer somewhat later in the day he and his companions might have escaped this painful experience. The priest's denunciation and the plot to murder the Methodists were made known to the local authorities, who had ordered the soldiers to meet and guard the preachers. But a mistake was made concerning the time of their arrival, and the scheme for their protection failed. The soldiers, however, marched. At the sight of them the rioters fled. The man who had attempted to kill John Healy was caught and handed over to a constable, who immediately released him. It would have been at the peril of his life if he had put the priest's servant in jail.

The people of Athlone were indignant at the treatment the Methodists had received. Charles Wesley walked down to the market-house and found that it was filled with those who had come to hear him preach. He was told that hundreds of people had been unable to obtain admission. Therefore he went to a ruined house, stood at a window which commanded the market-place, and preached to more than two thousand hearers. The Protestant minister and many gentlemen were among his hearers, and listened earnestly to the sermon. When the service was over, and Charles Wesley had returned to his inn, the minister and one of the officials came to see him, and to inquire about the wounded man. They asked for information concerning the assault, and promised that justice should be done. The clergyman spoke of the sermon, and said the doctrine which had been preached was the doctrine of the Church of England; he accepted some of the Methodist publications, and wished Charles Wesley 'God speed.'

When Charles Wesley and his friends left Athlone they were accompanied by a crowd of the people of the town, and by many of the Methodist soldiers. They moved on very slowly

for the sake of the wounded man. Then they reached 'the field of battle.' It was stained with blood. There they halted. They sang a song of triumph and praise to God, 'who had given them the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' As we listen to the sound of singing we think we can catch some of the words of a hymn that was then so often sung:

Omnipotent Redeemer,
Our ransomed souls adore Thee;
Our Saviour Thou,
We find it now,
And give Thee all the glory.

We sing Thine arm unshortened,
Brought through our sore temptation;
With heart and voice
In Thee rejoice,
The God of our salvation.

Then they said farewell to their faithful guards and rode on their way to Moate, and to Mr. Jonathan Handy's house. Arriving there, they sang a song of 'joy and thanksgiving,' and magnified the God by whom they had escaped death.[1]

The second incident which arrests our special attention occurred towards the close of Charles Wesley's long stay in Ireland. We record it, not only for its interest, but also that we may realize more distinctly the condition of the times in which the work of the Wesleys was done. It is well known that they considered the prisons as a part of their 'world-parish.' From the Oxford days onward they never forgot the wretched people who crowded the jails of this country. They visited them and preached to them. In some cases they accompanied those who were condemned to death to the scaffold, and helped them to bear their heavy fate by speaking words of comfort to them before they were launched into eternity. It must never be forgotten that during the eighteenth century men and women were executed for offences against the law that, in the present day, would merit comparatively light punishment. If we keep our eyes on that fact we shall have no hesitation in accepting Sir Spencer Walpole's verdict that 'nothing was more anomalous, more unfortunate, and

[1] See Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 2–5; Crookshank's *History of Methodism*, i. 26–28.

more indefensible than the Criminal Code which disgraced the Statute Book.'[1] It is an astounding fact that the men who were bent on reforming that code had to labour in vain until the nineteenth century was well on its way. Certain changes had been made, but it was not until March 2, 1819, that the reformers won their first great victory. During the earlier years of the nineteenth century the punishment of death could legally be inflicted for more than two hundred offences. Walpole says:

> It was a capital offence to pick a man's pocket; it was a capital offence to steal five shillings from a shop; it was a capital offence to steal a fish; it was a capital offence to rob a rabbit-warren; it was a capital offence to cut down a tree; it was a capital offence to personate a Greenwich pensioner; it was a capital offence to harbour an offender against the Revenue Acts. It would be possible to extend almost indefinitely the list of offences for which men could be legally hanged at the commencement of the nineteenth century.[2]

It is certain that during the whole of the Wesleys' mission the prisons contained crowds of persons who were condemned to death by the extraordinary laws of the Criminal Code of that time. It was not likely that the great religious reformers would overlook the condition of the prisons, passing them by as places with which they had no concern.

Let us follow Charles Wesley as he makes his way to Newgate, the Dublin prison. In the prison there is a woman in chains, who is brooding over the approach of a horrible death. Only a week of life is left to her. She has been in the grip of the law before; now there seems little hope of escape. Although the evidence against her was not very full, her life and character were taken into consideration at her last trial and she was condemned to die. She was found guilty of 'coining.' This crime was included in 'petty treasons,' and for women the punishment was death by burning. Lecky describes the process in restrained language. The description fills us with disgust at the cruelty of the age. This is what he says:

> A stake ten or eleven feet high was planted in the ground. An iron ring was fastened near the top, and from it the culprit was hung while the faggots were kindled under her feet. The law enjoined that

[1] *History of England*, ii. 132.
[2] *History of England*, ii. 132. See also Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 135–137, vii. 315–323.

she should be burnt alive, but in practice the sentence was usually mitigated, and she was strangled before the fire touched her body. A horrible case, however, occurred in 1726 at the execution of a murderess named Katherine Hayes. The fire scorching the hands of the executioner, he slackened the rope before he strangled her, and, though fresh faggots were hastily piled up, a considerable time elapsed before her agonies were terminated.[1]

No one possessing even a trace of humanity can read this description without a shudder; but in the eighteenth century these wretched scenes attracted multitudes to gaze upon them. Sensitiveness to human suffering was latent in the average Englishman of that time; in innumerable cases it was kept under remarkable control. It is no wonder that the maiming and murder of a few Methodists was a matter of insignificance in the eighteenth century.

Charles Wesley devoted himself to the case of this woman in the Dublin prison. At first he seems to have been disappointed with her; but he tried to lead her to the Cross. The Methodists prayed for her, and at last the answer came. With deep repentance she found her way to the Saviour, and found Him, as ever, a lover of penitent women. Then a Romish priest came to see her. He bade her pray to the Virgin Mary, but she replied, 'I have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' The Ordinary also visited her for the first time, and she told him 'the reason of the hope that was in her.' At the end of the week the news arrived that a reprieve had come, and a pardon was expected. Charles Wesley hastened to see her, but was surprised to find her full of fear and trouble. She was afraid that her release would lead to the loss of her new-found experience. On March 1 Charles Wesley met her. She was 'released from her chains, both soul and body.' She threw herself at his feet and cried, 'O, sir, under God, you have saved my soul. I have found mercy when I looked for judgement. I am saved by a miracle of mercy.'

On March 8 John Wesley landed in Ireland, and some days afterwards Charles Wesley returned to England. His hard work in Ireland had much reduced his strength. On landing in Wales, he made his way to Garth, being convinced he could not hold out for three more days of riding. It is not difficult to divine an additional reason for his change of route. On March 25 he arrived at Mr. Gwynne's house; and, through the

[1] *England in the Eighteenth Century*, ii., 135–136.

care that was taken of him in that pleasant home, he recovered. On Saturday, April 9, the eve of Easter Day, he arrived at the Foundery in London.

The detention of Charles Wesley in Ireland had given the two brothers an opportunity for conversation on the position of the work in Dublin and the other places in which Methodist Societies had been formed. John Wesley had been accompanied from England by Mr. Meriton and Robert Swindells, a lay preacher who did the work of an itinerant for more than forty years. We can imagine the topics of their conversation in the house in Cork Street, 'vulgarly called Dolphin's Barn Lane.' One of them must have been the acquisition of the Skinner's Alley House. John Wesley was not satisfied with the way in which the building had been acquired. He sympathized with the ejected Moravians. So late as April 16, 1748, he wrote a letter to his brother, who was then in England, which contained these words: 'Skinner's Alley House is now, as it ever was, a millstone about my neck. I shall shake it off as soon as possible, and do as I would be done to. I can never get over "We laid out so much money and have not had a penny returned."'[1] He felt that an injustice had been done to those who had paid for the 'fitting-up' of the 'House,' and he was disquieted by seeming to be a party to such a proceeding.

There was another subject which also deeply concerned him. Glowing accounts of the progress of Methodism in Dublin had been sent to him, and from them he was prepared to rejoice with the workers who had toiled so successfully. He never overestimated the value of mere numerical prosperity, but the news of advance, in the midst of persecution, delighted him. On his arrival in Ireland he immediately began the work of visiting the classes. The result is shown in the following entry in his *Journal* under the date March 16:

> I inquired into the state of the Society. Most pompous accounts had been sent to me, from time to time, of the great numbers that were added to it; so that I confidently expected to find therein six or seven hundred members. And how is the real fact? I left three hundred and ninety-four members, and I doubt if there are now three hundred and ninety-six! Let this be a warning to us all how we give in to that hateful custom of painting things beyond the life. Let us

[1] See *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iii. 46.

make a conscience of magnifying or exaggerating anything. Let us rather speak under than above the truth. We, of all men, should be punctual in all we say, that none of our words may fall to the ground.

John Wesley's second visit to Ireland occurred at a time when he was worn down with work and illness. But he filled up his days with toil. He cared for the Society; he preached in the 'Rooms' in Cork Street, Skinner's Alley, Marlborough Street, and Ship Street; also in Newgate and on Oxmantown Green. His pen was never idle. He wrote his final letter in the 'John Smith' correspondence. It is dated Dublin, March 23, 1747–8. He must have been relieved when the controversy was closed, as it had ceased to maintain the high standard with which it commenced.[1] After sending off his letter, he prepared for an expedition into the country in which Mr. Meriton and Robert Swindells were to be his companions. In Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, we find interesting particulars of this tour. It is clear that new centres of Methodist work were being created by the enterprise of the lay preachers; but our attention must be fixed on those with which we have become somewhat familiar. At Philipstown, in King's County, as no room would contain the congregation he was obliged to preach in the street, which was soon filled with those who flocked from every side. The next morning he held a five o'clock service, and had a large and serious congregation. Then he spoke 'severally' to those of the Society of whom forty were troopers. On April 2 he reached Athlone. His intention to visit the place was known, and two or three hundred people prepared to meet him and bring him into the town 'in state.' But he came two hours earlier than expected, and so escaped the greatest part of the crowd by arriving at Mr. Alder's, where he was to lodge. At six o'clock he took his stand at the window of the unfinished house, opposite the market-place, from which his brother had preached on that memorable day. He says, 'I scarce ever saw a better behaved or more attentive congregation. Many of the better sort followed us to Mr. Alder's, and gave us abundance of thanks and good words. So civil people as the Irish I have never yet seen, either in Europe or America.'[2]

[1] For the correspondence see *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 272–273, 276–280, 289–290.

[2] John Wesley's *Journal*, viii. 155.

The next day was Sunday. John Wesley surprised the people by holding a five o'clock service; but at least three hundred people were there. Then he walked about a mile from the town to visit a poor woman who was sick, and nearly a hundred and fifty persons attended him. We think this woman must have been the brave defender of John Healy, for on his way to the house he passed the spot where his lay preacher had been struck down. He stopped there; the people clustered round him, and they sang a hymn of praise to God. After praying with the poor woman, he was unwilling that so many persons should 'go empty away'; so he chose a smooth, grassy place near the road where they all kneeled down in prayer; then a psalm was sung and a short exhortation was given. In this manner they called to mind the great deliverance wrought out for them during that day of wild assault. After attending the morning service in the church, at which a plain, useful sermon was preached, Wesley went in the afternoon to the Connaught side of the town, where, as he was informed, there were only six families of Protestants, all the rest being Papists. But a large congregation assembled. Many had come from the country round about, and all listened eagerly to the sermon. At six o'clock he preached in the same place to a larger crowd. He was told afterwards that about three in four were Roman Catholics. They had come there in spite of the prohibition of their priests. He was convinced that all the seed had not fallen by the wayside, or on stony ground. On Monday he preached once more at five o'clock. He was much impressed with Athlone. All the town appeared to be moved. But, with his usual caution, he refrained from prophesying permanent success. He thought that 'the waters spread too wide to be deep,' so he suspended his judgement. Yet there can be no doubt that in Athlone he saw on that spring day signs of a future harvest.

Leaving Athlone, he rode with his companions to Moate; and then, after dining at Templemacateer, they went on to Tyrrell's Pass, where they stayed with Mr. Stephen Fouace. As we read Wesley's description of his visit to Tyrrell's Pass we feel we are in the presence of a most hopeful Society. After preaching at five o'clock he examined the classes, and found 'a surprising openness among them.' The members spoke about their spiritual experience in such a heart-moving fashion

that the 'examination' gave way to a prayer-meeting, in which, for above an hour, they wrestled with God in behalf of a woman who was full of 'affliction and dismay.' Prayer for her was answered; she was filled with joy unspeakable. Four young women also were 'cut to the heart,' and cried aloud 'to Him that is mighty to save.' Mr. Jonathan Handy accompanied Wesley to this meeting. He was not 'far from the Kingdom,' but was sorrowing almost without hope. He listened to the experience of the members and to the prayers that were offered for those who were in distress. Then came to him the moment of glad release, and he also was enabled 'mightily to praise God.' In the evening Wesley preached on 'He healeth those that are broken in heart.' Many of the neighbouring gentry were present, and most of them desired to stay to the meeting of the Society. Once more we listen to the singing of joyous songs celebrating the glory of the God of our salvation. This was the kind of Methodism that John Wesley longed to see in Ireland; he shared the joy of the singers. The next afternoon he bade farewell to Tyrrell's Pass, expecting to see the people again before his return to Dublin. We find from his statement that the Society at Tyrrell's Pass then consisted of about a hundred members. Nine were Papists, and several were Quakers. On April 6, at their earnest desire, he baptized seven of them. He confesses that when he said good-bye to these lovable people they hardly knew how to part.

As we follow John Wesley in this tour among the Irish Societies, we often hear him sound a note of disappointment. It is not enough to remember that, at the time, he was a weary man. We must go farther. We shall never understand his disappointments until we measure his ideals. His standard was determined by his own spiritual experiences. Was it too high? Let those who remember his journey to the Cross, and the great deliverance that came to him in the room in Aldersgate Street, answer that question. His experience there, and the scenes he had afterwards witnessed all over England, had fixed his standard. He could not be content with anything less than the conversion of the people to whom he preached. It is true that he was patient with those who were trying to find their way to Christ. He sympathized with them and encouraged them as they advanced slowly through

the twilight, but he ever urged them to travel towards the perfect day. It was with deep joy that he saw them kneeling at the Cross in the light of the ' opening heavens,' listening to the Saviour's assurance of their personal forgiveness.

On Good Friday, April 8, John Wesley returned to Athlone. The next day he held a service in ' a lone house ' in Connaught. The people listened, ' but did not appear to feel anything.' He doubted whether the time had come for preaching in the place. We watch him as he stands, in a somewhat melancholy mood, on the shore of Lough Rea. The lough is an expansion of the Shannon at a point about thirty miles from the source of that king of rivers. The Shannon is indeed a noble river. Leaving Lough Rea, it flows past places abounding in interest. It spreads into big lakes, and then sweeps on until it reaches its marvellous estuary and is lost in the Atlantic. It captures us by its majestic beauty. But the sad note that Wesley sounded on the shore of Lough Rea persists. Speaking of the Shannon, he says: ' There are many islands in it, once well inhabited, but now mostly desolate. In almost every one is the ruins of a church ; in one the remains of no less than seven. I never saw so many ruinous buildings in any country as in all parts of Ireland. I fear God hath still a controversy with this land, because it is defiled with blood.' He was not the only man who has sighed over the desolations of Ireland.

While we sympathize with John Wesley, and can understand his lamentation over departed glories, it is impossible to forget that a ruin has a note in its voice that should stir a man who is a pioneer in an attempt to effect a religious reformation. He mentions the seven churches, and undoubtedly refers to Clonmacnois, which stands some miles below Lough Rea. Dr. George T. Stokes, in his *History of Ireland and the Celtic Church*, enables us to see that famous sanctuary. After stating that Clonmacnois once occupied a position second only to Armagh itself in popular reverence, he says:

> To this day it presents us with some of the most genuine specimens of early Irish churches. Two round towers, numberless crosses covered with elaborate ornamentation, three of them still standing, an ancient castle, a well-preserved cashel, the ruins of seven churches, all genuine Celtic monuments, with but few traces of English work, unite to make Clonmacnois a most interesting spot for the historian or the archaeologist. The churches all seem specimens of the true old Irish style.

One alone out of the seven has a chancel attached. They are all oblong structures, and most of them very small. One is larger than any of the rest. It was the Great Church or cathedral. It is still in a fair state of preservation, owing doubtless to some repairs executed during the wars and confusions of the Commonwealth.[1]

It was the Danes who desecrated Clonmacnois when a tide of paganism overflowed the country. But those who now visit it will recognize the signs of its ancient splendour; and, if well instructed, will recall the work of the men who went out from this place to preach Christ and His salvation, not only in their own country, but in far-off lands.

If Wesley had been more fully acquainted with the ecclesiastical history of Ireland he would have found inspiration on the Shannon shore. But, turning from the past, if he had been able to look a little way into the future he would have banished his melancholy mood. In this country tour Thomas Williams was one of his companions. In 1749 we see Williams in Limerick. He is preaching in the open air to a vast crowd. We notice some men in it who are listening with strained attention. They are not Irishmen. At the close of the service they gather together. What are they saying? 'This is like the preaching we used to hear in Germany.' They are Palatines, and we shall meet them again. They, on this or some other occasion, interviewed the preacher, and invited him to visit Ballingarrane, the little town where they lived. Let us move on to 1752. John Wesley is in Limerick. One man, a Palatine, listens to his preaching and is deeply impressed. He goes home, and thinks much about what he has heard. Then, on Christmas Day, the light comes to him, and he rejoices in Christ his Saviour. His name is Philip Embury, and that name is not likely to be forgotten by the millions of American Methodists. If Wesley could have seen these golden links that were to bind the years together, the depression from which he suffered for a time when he looked on the Shannon and its islands would have vanished.

Before John Wesley left Athlone he had reason to revise his opinions concerning the religious condition of the Society in that place. Easter Sunday was a day of great

[1] Stokes's *History of Ireland*, 260. Dr. Stokes gives us interesting particulars of the work of St. Patrick in the neighbourhood of Clonmacnois. It will assist us to determine dates if we remember that he founded the See of Armagh in the year 445, a century and a half prior to the foundation of the See of Canterbury.

encouragement. At the church there was an attendance of communicants such as had never before been seen in Athlone. He preached to a crowd in the afternoon. Many Papists were present. In the evening they came again, to the alarm of the priest, who disturbed the service by driving his people away before him 'like a flock of sheep.' It was a somewhat dangerous proceeding, for the captain of the dragoons and his soldiers who were present were strongly inclined to stop him. The next day he preached to the Society, and the change for which he had longed came at last. In his record of the evening service we hear the note for which we have listened. He says: 'In the evening there appeared more emotion than ever I had seen before; but it was in a manner I never saw; not one here and there, but in all. Perhaps God is working here in a way we have not known, going on in a slow and even motion through the whole body of the people, that they may all remember themselves and be turned unto the Lord.' A glimpse of that manner of working had been given him in Cornwall; but at Athlone he seemed to have seen a light which often cheers a faithful minister who is tempted to say, 'I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for naught.'

John Wesley got back to Dublin on April 15, and prolonged his stay in Ireland for another month. He cared for the Society in the city, but never ceased to hear the voice that called him into the country. In an imperfect letter that has happily escaped the ravages of time, and which is dated April 16, 1748, he says, 'I must make another journey into the country. Our Societies there already consist of 350 members; but they are most of them raw, undisciplined soldiers, and without great care will desert to their old master.' And so on April 28, in pouring rain, having only recently risen from a sick-bed, he set off on horseback, and managed to reach Tyrrell's Pass. His country tour lasted until May 11, when he got back to Dublin in the evening, 'faint and weary.' He rested for two days; and on Sunday, May 15, finding his strength greatly restored, he preached twice on Oxmantown Green. At the evening service an incident occurred which is significant. A man in the crowd, after listening for some time, cried out, shaking his head, 'Aye, he is a Jesuit; that's plain!' A Roman Catholic priest, who happened to be near,

replied aloud, 'No, he is not; I would to God he was!' Wesley was intending to sail for England after this service; but the boat was detained until the Wednesday of that week. Then he went on board, and the day after landed at Holyhead.

John Wesley arrived in Bristol on Wednesday, May 25; and on Whit-Sunday, May 29, he preached in Weavers' Hall at about four o'clock in the morning and at the 'Old Orchard' at seven. At two o'clock he preached under the sycamore-tree at Kingswood. At five o'clock he preached again in the 'Old Orchard.' Then he rode to Kingswood,and closed the day with a love-feast. The visit to Bristol raises a question which has often been in our mind when watching the visits of John and Charles Wesley at this time to Ireland. From August 8, 1747, to May 18, 1748, their chief attention was paid to the new mission. One or the other of them was in Ireland during a period of nine months. Were there any circumstances which gave them opportunities for such an absence from England? So far as Bristol was concerned, during the latter part of the time, the answer is easy. The Bristol 'Room' was being rebuilt, and was not ready for use until September, 1748. In Cornwall the work of Dr. Borlase and his confederates had been so successful that the presence of the Wesleys there was not helpful to the success of the work, but it was carried on by the lay preachers, the exhorters, and the members of the Societies. Cornwall's extremity was Ireland's opportunity. Newcastle Methodism was well organized, and we note that at the Conference of 1747 an exceptionally strong appointment had been made. The lay preachers at the Orphan House for November and December, 1747, were Thomas Richards and Joseph Cownley, two men who possessed John Wesley's confidence. At the beginning of the new year the arrangements for further stationing were in John Wesley's hands. He would take care that suitable men were sent to the great northern outpost of Methodism. As to London, the plan of alternating the visits of the two brothers to Ireland met the difficulty. It will be seen, therefore, that the time was opportune for helping Ireland, and for commencing a work that was to have a profound effect on the future of Methodism.

VII

THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

On April 16, 1748, John Wesley wrote a letter from Dublin in which the following sentence occurred: 'The Conference must be in London this year, in order to the meeting of the stewards of all the Societies.' It is natural to conclude that some important question had arisen which needed to be discussed, not only by the Conference, but by the stewards of the Societies. At this point our difficulties are increased by tantalizing blanks in the *Journals* both of John and Charles Wesley. We have no record of a general meeting of stewards, or of the Conference. Our perplexities are not lessened by William Myles's positive statement that the Conference of 1748 was held in Bristol.[1] It is fortunate that we possess John Bennet's copy of the *Minutes of the Conference* held in London.

John Wesley had much on his mind during his second visit to Ireland. The care of the Societies was upon him, but he carried that burden with wonderful equanimity. He must, however, have been disturbed by a conversation with his brother during the time they were together in March. Charles Wesley opened his mind to him on the subject of Miss Sarah Gwynne. Charles Wesley tells us that the idea of marriage was then 'a distant first thought; and was not likely to come to a proposal, as he had not given the least hint either to Miss Gwynne or the family.' But a keen-eyed onlooker must have seen the growth of his affection; and doubtless John Wesley had observed it. When the revelation was made he 'neither opposed nor much encouraged' his brother's intention. But that 'intention' suggested a serious prospect. Charles Wesley's marriage might mean that the fascinations of domestic life might restrict his wanderings as an itinerant evangelist. He was an invaluable pioneer, a stormer of strongholds, a

[1] Myles's *Chronological History*, 65. Fourth ed.

fearless facer of mobs, a man whose presence was an inspiration to the persecuted, a leader of forlorn hopes, whose example kindled and sustained the courage of those who risked their lives in the high places of the battle-field. John Wesley may be forgiven if he detected the possibility of ' a parting of the ways.' But there may have been another reason for his reticence. We wonder if he exchanged confidences with his brother. Did his own thoughts wander towards England? Subsequent events lead us to judge that in Dublin he said nothing to Charles Wesley about the growing attractiveness of the Orphan House at Newcastle.

On Thursday morning, June 2, John and Charles Wesley were at the Foundery in London. John Wesley was suffering from the plague of Georgia. The attacks of intermittent fever which had weakened him in Ireland continued. As we watch him making his way with his brother towards Soho our sympathy is excited. The Bennet *Minutes* say that the Conference of 1748 was held at the Chapel House in Tower Street. The back of West Street Chapel was in Tower Street; there was in that street an entrance to the Chapel House.

We must now consider the business transacted at this important Conference. When it commenced in the morning of Thursday, June 2, the following persons were present: John and Charles Wesley and two other clergymen, William Felton and Charles Manning, the Vicar of Hayes in Middlesex. Six lay preachers were with them: Thomas Maxfield, John Jones, Thomas Meyrick, John Trembath, Edward Perronet, and Jonathan Reeves. Later in the day Richard Thomas Bateman, of St. Bartholomew's, John Green, who became a clergyman, and William Tucker, a lay preacher, joined them. John Wesley, as usual, had prepared a clear agenda. In addition, he had made an elaborate sketch of the special business that was to engage the attention of the Conference at its final meeting on the Saturday morning. At the outset of the first day's ' conversations ' it was agreed that, as the time would not permit the examination of points of doctrine, only two subjects should be considered at this Conference—discipline, and the settlement of all things relating to the school which was to be opened in a few days at Kingswood.

The first topic discussed concerned the relation of the Societies to the Church of England. It is well known that clergymen and others who were beginning to be friendly with the Methodists sometimes asked John Wesley to preach in their churches; they, however, objected to the formation of Societies in their parishes. On the subject of the formation of Methodist Societies, special pressure was brought to bear on him, not only in 1748, but during several subsequent years. The Conference faced the question, and gave counsel that influenced Wesley's action. From the conversation we find that the plan had already been tried. For more than a year the Methodists had preached without forming Societies in a large tract of land stretching from Newcastle to Berwick-upon-Tweed; and 'almost all the seed had fallen by the wayside; scarcely any fruit remained.' It was agreed that the clergymen's suggestion could not be accepted for many reasons. Among others: '1. Because the preacher cannot give proper exhortations and instructions to those who are convinced of sin unless he has opportunities of meeting them apart from the mixed, unawakened multitude. 2. They cannot watch over one another in love unless they are thus united together. Nor, 3. Can the believers build up one another and bear one another's burdens.' From this position John Wesley was never moved; and by his firmness the stability of Methodism was secured.

The next question has a look of 'modernism' in it that attracts attention. It was asked, 'Ought we not to have a longer time of probation for the rich before we admit them into our Society?' The uncertainty concerning the piety of rich men haunts our own times, and we regret that we have only a meagre report of the eighteenth century conversation on this subject. Those who have studied the writings of John Wesley are aware that no one spoke more plainly to rich men. But he possessed a discriminating mind. He valued a consistent Christian man even although he suffered from an abundance of wealth. The Conference decided that it did not seem necessary to make the suggested extension of the period of trial; but the conversation led to the adoption of the rule that the time of probation for rich and poor should be three months. Another regulation was passed at this point. It was resolved that every other meeting of the Society,

either at the Foundery, the Chapel,[1] Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle, or elsewhere, should be 'inviolably private, no one stranger being admitted on any account or pretence whatsoever.' It was also directed that public notice of this rule should be given in every place. On the alternate nights, 'strangers might be admitted with caution.' When we remember the early days in London, when 'strangers' invaded the meetings of the Society and caused much angry discussion, we see the wisdom of this rule.

On two other subjects of permanent interest the Conference passed resolutions. It was determined that 'a relapser into gross sin' must not be readmitted into the Society until after three months, but that he might attend the Society meetings on those nights when strangers were admitted. 'In order to purge and quicken the Society,' it was also agreed to examine the leaders strictly, both with regard to their grace, their gifts, and their manner of meeting their several classes; and a direction was given to the preachers to meet the leaders weekly before preaching at Wapping, Snowsfields, and Deptford. It had been the custom for the leaders to attend the weekly meetings of the stewards in order that they might pay to them the moneys they had received in their classes; but in the resolution of the 1748 Conference, we note the point of a new departure in the direction of the leaders' meeting, which now occupies so prominent a place in the Methodist organization.

At the close of the session on Thursday a very important question was raised. We have suggested that the Wesleys' residence in Georgia had seriously affected their health. In Ireland John Wesley's work had been done under depressing conditions, and a note in John Bennet's manuscript *Journal* reveals the fact that at this Conference John Wesley's attack of intermittent fever still continued. The members of the Conference watched their chief with anxiety. In addition, the perilous work carried on by the Wesleys in the midst of ruthless mobs made their leadership uncertain, and caused the question of their successors to arise in the minds of those who understood the supreme importance of their mission. It is clear that those who were present at the session in the Chapel House were convinced that Methodism had taken its place

[1] 'The Chapel' was West Street Chapel, in London. It was invariably so called in the earlier days of Methodism.

among the organizations which were carrying on Christian work in England. Is it any wonder that the question was asked, 'If it please God to take our present ministers away, who should succeed in their place?' That question again emerged in later times. For nearly forty years it remained unanswered. During that long interval the reply of the Conference of 1748 was found to be sufficient: 'We cannot tell yet. God will make it plain whenever the time shall come.'

On June 3 the Conference resumed its sessions in the Chapel House. Samuel Larwood, James Jones, and William Shent, three lay preachers, were added to the company. It is with special pleasure that we record the fact that Howell Harris was also there. In Myles's *Chronological History* there is 'A list of all the Itinerant Methodist Preachers who have laboured in connexion with the late Rev. John Wesley, and with the Methodist Conference.' In the first race of those preachers we find the name of Howell Harris. Myles marks him as being associated with Wesley from 1747 to 1750. During that term the relations of John Wesley and Howell Harris were exceptionally close.

In glancing over the business of this day we regret that we have so brief an account of the proceedings. Most of the time was given up to the consideration of one subject, and we have to exercise the art of 'reading between the lines.' We will deal, first, with an act we can easily understand. On this day seven assistants were 'received into the work.' Among them was William Darney, who was then making his way from the North to the Conference in the company of John Bennet. After this business was transacted the whole of the day seems to have been devoted to the consideration of the question, 'What can be done in order to a closer union of our assistants with each other?' The answer shows that the time had come when there was a danger of misunderstanding and disunion, and that it was necessary to face an unpleasant subject. The Conference agreed on the following answer: '1. Let them be deeply convinced of the want there is of it at present, and of the absolute necessity of it. 2. Let them pray that God would give them earnestly to desire it; and that he would fulfil the desire He has given them.' The importance of the subject thus raised no one will deny who is acquainted with the history of Methodism during its most

critical years. In those times one of the most effective safeguards of the Methodist Church has been the unity of its ministers; and it was well that so early as 1748 the danger of disunion was perceived. The next question yields more light on this matter of vital importance. We must remember that in 1748 the lay preachers served John Wesley as 'sons in the gospel.' They cheerfully faced the dangers of the campaign; they were often the pioneers who risked their lives in preparing the way for the coming of the clerical evangelists. Some of them gave up their business; out of fervent love for their work they consented to serve without any money allowance. They were content to depend on the hospitality of the Societies for their daily food and shelter. The best of them took their orders from John Wesley without demur, and went to the places to which he appointed them. It was in their own power 'to depart from the work' when they chose, and Wesley had the right to dismiss them. The early Methodist preachers were loyal men, true to their chief and devoted to their work. Some of them were inclined now and then to criticize Wesley's directions; but it is well to remember that the free criticism of governors is one of the consolations of the governed.

The proceedings of the Conference of 1748 reveal the fact that the lay preachers had a legitimate grievance which called for immediate redress. Some of them resented the practice of certain preachers and members of Society, who conveyed to Wesley unfavourable opinions of their fitness for the work in which they were engaged. They also thought that he too readily accepted such reports, and thereby did them an injustice. The days were approaching when 'objections to preachers' would be stated in, and judged by, the Conference; but that time had not arrived.[1] The promise of its coming may be heard if we listen to the conversation in the Chapel House on Friday, June 3, 1748. The questions and answers on the subject are contained in the Bennet *Minutes*, and are as follows:

Q. Ought not the ministers to have as much confidence as may be in those who serve as sons in the gospel?

[1] In Jacob Rowell's 'Notes' of the proceedings of the Leeds Conference held in 1753 we find the following entry on May 24: '*Q.* 2. Have any of you any objections to the life or doctrine of any Itinerant Preacher? (Whose names were then mentioned one by one, and their behaviour severally considered.)' See *Minutes of Conference*, vol. i., 719.

A. It is highly expedient they should.

Q. Would it not, then, be well that they should be exceeding unready to believe any evil report concerning them?

A. They ought not to believe it till they have seen them, or written to them and received an answer.

Turning to the other side of the question—the criticism of Wesley by some of his preachers—the following questions and answers are recorded.

Q. Suppose one of our assistants should be tempted to think evil of us, and should mention it to another, ought that other to mention it to us?

A. Not if it was spoken only as a temptation. And if he thinks it a thing of moment which we ought to know, still it may be best to wait a little till he who was under that temptation comes to town, and then let him speak it himself.

The conversation, which had a direct bearing on the unity of the Methodist preachers of that day, closed with these advices to the Assistants: 'Let them beware how they despise each other's gifts, and much more how they speak anything bordering thereon. Let them never speak slightingly of each other in any kind. Let them defend one another's character in every point to the uttermost of their power. Let them labour in honour each to prefer the other to himself.' That advice was accepted; and it has proved a fourfold bond which has secured the unity of the Methodist preachers in times of peace and in days of tempestuous weather.

On Saturday, June 4, the Conference reassembled in the Chapel House, Mr. James Erskine being added to the company. He was a Scotsman, a D.C.L. of Oxford, and a friend of Lady Huntingdon and the Wesleys. The subject of discussion on this day appealed to him. The whole of the time was devoted to the question of the new school which had been erected near the school for colliers' children at Kingswood, and was ready to be opened.[1]

Before the Conference met John Wesley had drawn up a plan on which the new school was to be conducted. Those who study it in the present day will be surprised at its wide range. It is an eighteenth-century example of 'the Higher Education.' In looking at it we detect signs of the influence

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 314.

of men trained at Charterhouse and Westminster. We also are reminded of the fact that John Wesley, through his friendship with Dr. Doddridge, had ascertained the course of study pursued in the best Dissenting Academies, and that he had visited the Moravian settlements, and some of the Universities of Germany.

The ' plan ' as it stood after full consideration by the Conference of 1748 is contained in the first of the *Publications of the Wesley Historical Society*. We will indicate some of its principal points. The name of the school was soon fixed. It was to be called ' Kingswood School.' Its ' design ' is clearly stated. The object aimed at was ' to train up children there, if God permit, in every branch of useful learning, from the very alphabet till they are fit, as to all acquired qualifications, for the work of the ministry.' In other words, it was to be a school of the highest class for the education of the sons of Methodists, and a place in which suitable young men might receive an education which would fit them for the work of the ministry.

Let us look at the first part of the plan. Ordinarily, the boys were to be taken into the school between the ages of six and ten years. There were seven classes. When a boy had passed through them all he was expected to have acquired a knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, rhetoric, geography, history, logic, ethics, physics, geometry, and algebra. In the Bennet *Minutes* the stages of the advance in learning are set out ; the list should be consulted.[1] It will be sufficient to mention the subjects taught in the seventh class : ' Mr. Law's *Serious Call*, which they translate. Milton, which they repeat. Tully, *de Natura Deorum*, which they translate. Casimir. Xenophon's *Cyrus*—translate. Plato's *Dialogues*, Homer's *Iliad*—repeat. Now also they make Greek verses. And to declaim. Hebrew grammar. Hebrew Bible. *Vassii Rhetorica.*' Training in religious knowledge received special attention. The boys on their upward way read *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a suitable book for such a journey. St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Thomas à Kempis, Haliburton's *Life*, Law's *Christian Perfection* and his *Serious Call*, and other books, the practical value of which had been proved by the Wesleys. Southey,

[1] See *Publications of the W.H.S.*, No. 1, 54–55.

evidently impressed by the programme of studies, declared that 'the things to be taught at Kingswood School make a formidable catalogue in the founder's plan.'[1] To that statement we shall all give our consent. But this question arises: 'Was there in England at that time any other school which gave its boys a better chance of acquiring a complete education in the higher knowledge?' We may put the 'plan' aside as the production of an 'idealist'; but we have learned that 'idealist' is sometimes only another name for a far-seeing 'prophet.'

When we turn from the scholastic to the disciplinary arrangements of the plan our confidence in its composer's wisdom is lessened. Fortunately, time has proved itself on the side of the boys. It is well known that the discipline of the school was intended to be exceptionally severe. The prohibition of all 'play' and of all 'holidays' still fills us with amazement. Southey carries us with him when he says that Wesley had learnt the sour German proverb, 'He who plays when he is a child will play when he is a man,' and that he had forgotten an English one, proceeding from good nature and good sense, which tells us by what kind of discipline Jack may be made a dull boy. We regret that Wesley did not define 'play.' At the Charterhouse, at Oxford, and in Georgia, he found time for pleasant relaxation. He certainly worked when he was a man.[2]

The Conference decided that French was to be taught when a boy had 'gone through the school.' We note that three masters were proposed as teachers of 'the languages,' and three as teachers 'for reading, writing, &c.' Southey says, 'So little was economy in education understood in those days, that there was an establishment of six masters for the twenty-eight scholars' who entered the school during the two or three months after it was opened. If he had recognized the fact that three of the six masters, John Jones, Thomas Richards, and Richard Moss, were poorly-paid lay preachers, he might have mitigated the severity of his criticism. Another fact should also be noted. John Wesley considered that John Jones and Thomas Richards, who afterwards became clergymen, were fitted for the position of teachers of languages.

[1] *Life of Wesley*, 345. Bohn's ed.

[2] It is probable that Wesley's prohibition of 'play' was derived from the Moravian chool rules.

When we also remember that, at the first Conference, 'assistants' were recommended to read the Greek Testament, and more than a dozen books of Latin and Greek authors, we are reluctant to accept the legend that the lay preachers of that day were all illiterate men.[1]

Those who in the dusk can see the first touches of the dawn will detect the importance of the section in Wesley's 'scheme' which deals with boys who have 'gone through the school.' Reading it, we conclude that he thought he had reached a solution of the difficult question of 'The Seminary for Labourers.' He believed in a trained ministry; he held that belief throughout his life. In 1748 he imagined that Kingswood School would help him to accomplish his purpose. It was 'a devout imagination,' but it excites our sympathy. Let us look at the pathetic programme.

When a boy had gone through the school, and had shown signs of moral and spiritual fitness for the work of the ministry, Wesley intended he should receive a further training in the school for five years. The first year was to be devoted to the study of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Testament, with Franke's *Manducatio*. In addition, he had to study the Apostolic Fathers, especially Tertullian, and an abridgement of Pearson *On the Creed*, which Wesley was to prepare. Aldrich's *Logic*, among other books, had also to be read. In the second year, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and St. Cyprian had to be read, together with Pascal's *Thoughts*. Wesley had also to abridge Dr. Gell's *Works* for the use of the students, and 'Our *Tracts*' had to be studied. We look with some amazement at the next item—Universal History. A *Compendium of Ethics*, and Euclid's *Elements*, close the list. The third year's men were to enlarge their acquaintance with the Apostolic Fathers by studying Chrysostom's *De Sacerdotio* and St. Augustine's *Works*. Their labours were lightened by a perusal of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Then they had to turn their attention to a *History of the Council of Trent* and Burnet's *History of the Reformation*; also to algebra and physics. In the fourth year Ephrem Syrus and St. Jerome had to be read; also an abridgement of Nelson's *Sermons*. In history Rapin and Clarendon, and in metaphysics a compendium had to be studied. In their fifth year St. Basil, Forbes's *Instructiones*

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 218.

Historico-Theologicæ, and Heylyn's *Tracts*, engaged their attention, and completed an education of remarkable breadth and variety. Wesley's 'scheme' for the education of his preachers was never realized during his lifetime, but it is impossible to read it without admiration of his foresight, and sympathy with him in his disappointment.

On Monday, June 6, the Conference, changing its place of meeting, assembled in one of the rooms of the Foundery. In glancing over the company we note certain additions to its number. John Bennet and William Darney have arrived from the North. They started from Chinley, in Derbyshire, on May 29, and rode to London, getting there on Friday, June 3. They do not seem to have gone to the Conference on Saturday; but, from John Bennet's MS. *Journal*, we find that he preached at Snowsfields on the Sunday. Another face is familiar to us. We have lost sight of it for some years, but do not forget the service rendered to Charles Wesley by William Holland on May 17, 1738, when they began to read together Luther on the Galatians.[1] Holland subsequently joined the Moravians; but in 1747 he seems to have separated from them. The Wesleys would welcome his presence in the Conference. Three other men are there whose attendance attracts our special attention. We know one of them. He has acted as a lay preacher for a time; but in 1748 he attended the Conference as one of the stewards of the Society at the Foundery. His name is William Briggs.[2] He is accompanied by William Welch, another Foundery steward. Near them we see another steward, Patrick Thompson, of Newcastle-on-Tyne. We have no record of the stewards' meeting which John Wesley mentioned in his letter from Dublin, but the presence of these stewards in the Conference suggests that such a meeting had been held.

The first business of the Conference concerned the leaders of the classes. On June 2 a resolution had been passed which referred especially to the weekly meeting of the leaders at Wapping, Snowsfields, and Deptford. The Conference on June 6 directed that the leaders near Short's Gardens should meet the preacher there every Monday night after preaching; and, further, that the leaders should converse with the preachers

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 190.

[2] William Briggs in 1753 was appointed the first book steward at the Foundery, in conjunction with Thomas Butts.

'as frequently and as freely as possible.' Among other directions to the leaders the following is of permanent significance: 'In meeting classes let them diligently inquire how every soul prospers: not only how each person observes the outward rules, but how they grow in the knowledge and love of God'; it was also suggested that the classes should be made 'lively and profitable to those who meet.'

As we are conscious of the fact that after the Conference of 1748 we shall lose the guidance of the Bennet *Minutes*, it will be of service if we show the geographical divisions of the Methodist Societies at the time when the London Conference of 1748 was held. There were nine divisions. We will give them as they stand in the Bennet *Minutes*, venturing to correct the spelling of some of the place-names:

I. London: including (1) London itself; (2) Kent and Surrey; (3) Essex; (4) Brentford; (5) Windsor; (6) Wycombe; (7) Oxford; (8) Reading; (9) Blewbury; (10) Salisbury.

II. Bristol: including (1) Bristol itself; (2) Kingswood; (3) Bath; (4) Bearfield (Bradford-on-Avon); (5) The Devizes; (6) Road; (7) Coleford; (8) Oakhill; (9) Shepton Mallet; (10) Middlezoy; (11) Beer Crocombe; (12) Taunton.

III. Cornwall: including (1) Tavistock; (2) Plymouth Dock; (3) Trewint; (4) St. Ewe; (5) Gwennap; (6) St. Agnes; (7) Illogan, &c.; (8) St. Ives; (9) The Western Societies.

IV. Ireland: including (1) Dublin; (2) Philipstown; (3) Tullamore; (4) Tyrrell's Pass; (5) Ballyboy; (6) Athlone.

V. Wales: including (1) Cardiff; (2) Fonmon; (3) Llanmaes, &c.; (4) Llanishen.

VI. Staffordshire: including (1) Stroud; (2) Cirencester; (3) Stanley; (4) Evesham; (5) Wednesbury; (6) Shrewsbury; (7) Leominster.

VII. Cheshire: including (1) Cheshire itself; (2) Nottingham; (3) Derbyshire; (4) Lancashire; (5) Sheffield, &c.

VIII. Yorkshire: including (1) Leeds; (2) Birstall; (3) Keighley; (4) Acomb; (5) Sykehouse; (6) Epworth; (7) Hainton; (8) Grimsby; (9) The Fens.

IX. Newcastle: including (1) Osmotherley; (2) Newcastle itself; (3) Sunderland; (4) Biddick; (5) Burnopfield; (6) The Spen; (7) Swalwell; (8) Horsley-on-Tyne; (9) Plessey; (10) Berwick-upon-Tweed.

The names in the foregoing list rouse many memories of hard and dangerous work done by the Wesleys, their lay preachers, and those who were associated with them in their work of reforming the nation. When we survey the field of battle with sin, ignorance, violence, and prejudice we find it difficult to conceive that this advance had been made within the short period of about ten years. We chasten our exaltation by remembering that such success is always accompanied by danger. If we for a moment overlook that fact we are reminded of it as we turn once more to the proceedings of the Conference. Here are two questions that were asked: '1. How may we have a more exact knowledge of the state of the Societies in each division? 2. Would it not be of use if all the Societies were more firmly and closely united together?' The answer to the first was: 'Let the preachers, assisted by the stewards in each society, take an exact list of them every Easter. Let these lists be transmitted within three weeks after Easter to the persons appointed in each division to receive them. Let this same person at the same time diligently inform himself of the spiritual and temporal state of each Society. And let him bring these lists with him to the following Conference and give an account of all.' That plan, in its main provisions, has proved its value up to the present time. Some of the critics of Methodism have attributed the habit of 'numbering the people' to a desire of the Methodists to 'bulk large' in the estimation of other churches, and they have warned them, by the example of David, to shun a dangerous process. But the motive of such 'numbering' is revealed by the question and answer we have quoted.

The second question, concerning the usefulness of 'more firmly and closely' uniting the Societies together, suggests more than the answer contains: 'It would be much to the glory of God, to the ease of the minister, and to the benefit of the Societies themselves, both in things spiritual and temporal.' We look beyond the boundaries of the reply, and remember that at this time, the 'United Societies of the People called Methodists' were in peril. The proceedings of the 1748 Conference on the second day of its sessions show that John Wesley's management of some matters was being subjected to criticism. We are not able to name the critics; nor is it necessary. The original Methodists, as we may call them,

were devoted to him. They had come under his personal influence; and, through his preaching, many of them had entered into a new world of religious experience. But as the work spread, persons such as those who had belonged to John Bennet's and William Darney's Societies were received into the Methodist Societies to whom Wesley and the Methodist preachers were comparative strangers. It was inevitable that this should have an effect. We shall have to return to the subject; and, for the present, will content ourselves with this suggestion concerning difficulties which were about to arise. The years have shown that the 'firm and close' union of the Methodist Societies has ever been their shield of protection.

One of the last questions asked and answered at this Conference has a special attraction in the opinion of all who seek the welfare of children: '*Q*. Might not the children in every place be formed into little Societies? *A*. Let the preacher try by meeting them apart and giving them suitable exhortations.' The experiment was made, and it succeeded. Like every other arrangement, it has passed through various forms, but the leaders of Junior Society classes in the present day may look back to 1748 as a year in which they are specially interested.

After the journeys of the assistants had been fixed, this important Conference ended. As we watch its members disperse we close John Bennet's copy of its *Minutes*, with an acknowledgement of our obligation to him for the help he has afforded.

VIII

PROGRESS AND PERSECUTION

NOTWITHSTANDING the feebleness which had resulted from his long attack of fever, John Wesley, on Sunday, June 5, 1748, the day before the Conference closed, preached in Moorfields both morning and evening. There had been much tumult on the preceding Sunday, but, he says, 'All was quiet now, and the power of God seemed even to compel sinners to come in.' The Sunday after the Conference he designed to preach 'in the fields' at seven o'clock in the morning, but a great thunderstorm and heavy rain prevented him. At eleven o'clock, however, he went to St. Bartholomew's, Smithfield, and preached. He was delighted with the conduct of the congregation. On Wednesday, June 15, he again preached there. The following Sunday he took his stand in Moorfields, morning and afternoon, and addressed crowds of serious people. The toils of the day being over, he began his journey to Bristol. It was not advisable that he should mount his horse; so a sympathetic friend sent his sedan-chair to the Foundery, and he was carried to Brentford. The next day after preaching at Reading, he rode to Hungerford. On Tuesday, June 21, he arrived in Bristol, and preached to a host of people in the Old Orchard.

Before describing the important events which occurred during John Wesley's visit to Bristol we must say something about the owner of the sedan-chair. In following the progress of Methodism at this time, it is essential that we should bear in mind the work that was being done by George Whitefield and others under the protection of Lady Huntingdon. The Methodist doctrines were influencing many persons who moved in 'the upper circles' of English social life. Lady Huntingdon's drawing-room meetings were attended by men and women whose names are familiar to those who are acquainted with the history of this country at that time. The spread of 'Methodism'

extorted a cry of alarm from Horace Walpole. We never take him too seriously; but in his letter to his friend, Sir Horace Mann, we detect a genuine note of terror. On May 3, 1749, he writes: 'If you ever think of returning to England, as I hope it will be long first, you must prepare yourself with Methodism. I really believe by that time it will be necessary; this sect increases as fast as almost ever any religious nonsense did.'[1] This may be a flash of Walpole's frivolity, but there is reason to doubt such an explanation. In 1741 Lady Mary Hastings, Lady Huntingdon's sister-in-law, had startled the fashionable world of London by marrying Benjamin Ingham, who itinerated among the Societies he had formed in Yorkshire and elsewhere. We can imagine the flutter in the coteries of the West End when the news was told. The chatter has died out long ago, but Walpole's words remind us that at the time they were written Methodism had found a sphere in the drawing-room, and was not confined exclusively to 'fields' and 'preaching-houses.'

Those who attended the meetings held in the house of Lady Huntingdon in 1748 would have seen there a Colonel in the British army. He had listened to the preaching of Whitefield. He had come under the influence of the Wesleys; he had conversed closely with Lady Huntingdon on spiritual religion, and had been led into the light. A phrase describes him: 'He is really a second Colonel Gardiner.' That was the verdict of Lady Huntingdon and Dr. Doddridge. It was he who thought of John Wesley's physical weakness and sent his chair to the Foundery. It is pleasant to watch Colonel Gumley. At this moment, however, we must lose sight of him and think of his wife. She occupies a high place in the affection of those who know the kindness of her heart. We have reached the time when Kingswood School was to be opened, and we must mention an illustration of Mrs. Gumley's generosity. When John Wesley was entering on his design of erecting the new school at Kingswood he met Mrs. Gumley, probably at Bath. They talked together about the project, and she was so pleased with it that she went to her desk and brought him five hundred pounds in bank-notes, desiring him to accept them and enter on his plan at once. He did so. After a lapse of time Wesley met her again. She asked how

[1] Lecky's *England in the Eighteenth Century*, iii. 123.

the building went on, and if he required any further assistance. He told her that he had laid out all the money he had received, and that he was three hundred pounds in debt. He apologized for mentioning this fact, and entreated her not to consider it as her concern. She immediately retired from the room, and then returned bringing him the sum he had mentioned. Wesley never forgot her kindness. He told the story in after years; and two of the Methodist preachers who heard it related it to William Myles, who records it in his *Chronological History of the People called Methodists*. Wesley does not seem to have mentioned the name of the donor. Southey says she was Lady D'Arcy Maxwell; but as Wesley did not meet her for the first time until May, 1764, that guess must be dismissed. One of the best informed and most careful of our Methodist antiquaries was the late Mr. George Stampe, of Grimsby. In his annotated copy of the fourth edition of Myles's *Chronological History* we have found the missing name. Mr. Stampe enters it in two places. We have no hesitation in accepting his decision. In later years Mrs. Gumley showed great beneficence to Charles Wesley. That fact is well known; but her gifts to John Wesley when he was projecting and building Kingswood School had remained a secret for many years.[1]

It is difficult to follow the proceedings of John Wesley after his arrival in Bristol. He makes no entry in his *Journal* on June 21 and 22. We turn to Charles Wesley's *Journal*, but get no light. He does not mention the opening of Kingswood School, although he composed a hymn for the occasion. It is not difficult to account for his silence. When he arrived in Bristol on Monday, June 20, he found that 'Mr. Gwynne and Miss Sally had got there' a little before him. The information to be gleaned from his *Journal* for several days after that event is slight. In the absence of precise entries in the Wesleys' *Journals* we turn to Myles's *History*. He says that on June 22 'the fifth Conference was held in Bristol. Seventeen preachers were present, among whom was Mr. Philip Gibbs, late Baptist minister of Plymouth, who at that time was stationed on one of our circuits.'[2] We now know that the fifth Conference was held in London; but that mistake need not cause us to doubt the fact that immediately after the

[1] Myles's *Chronological History*, 66–67; Southey's *Life of Wesley*, 346, Bohn's ed.; John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 71, *note*.

[2] *Chronological History*, 65–66.

London Conference another was held in Bristol. Myles gives no information concerning the business transacted.

On Friday, June 24, 1748, the new school at Kingswood was opened. There was a large congregation of Methodist people, many of whom had 'come from far.' John Wesley preached from that difficult text which lays down a rule to which there are not a few exceptions: 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' Charles Wesley was present. To-day we listen to the far-off sound of the singing of his hymn. Words reach us that express the spirit of the Wesleys and those who most completely sympathize with their ideals:

> Unite the pair so long disjoined,
> Knowledge and vital piety;
> Learning and holiness combined,
> And truth and love, let all men see
> In those whom up to Thee we give,
> Thine, wholly Thine, to die and live.

After the sermon the Wesleys administered the Lord's Supper, and the memorable service closed. In connexion with the opening service, a meeting was held at which the rules of the school, prepared at the London Conference, were considered and settled. They were afterwards published. From them those who sent their boys to the school had an opportunity of knowing the conditions under which they were received.

We can picture the groups that inspected the school. Let us join one of them. We see that the building makes no pretence to architectural beauty. It is a plain, high oblong of five stories, with an abundance of windows. We judge the number of stories to be five after inspecting a picture of the school which appears in Jonathan Crowther's *Portraiture of Methodism*. Above the dormitories there is a window, close to the roof, which reminds us of Wesley's study at the Orphan House, Newcastle. It is an improved specimen of that structure, but it looks like the calm retreat of which Wesley sometimes speaks. Standing in front of the school, we notice above the door a tablet which bears a Latin inscription. It states that the school was dedicated by John Wesley for the use of the Church and the nation. As the school had been so long in building, it is probable that on dedication day the gardens were in order

as represented in the picture; at any rate, we hope that the fine avenue of branching forest trees gave a welcome shade to those who walked there on that summer day.

Those who watched John Wesley on the day when Kingswood School was 'dedicated' must have felt much concern for him. During his visit to Ireland in March he had suffered from fever, and it was still upon him. He had found no time for rest; his days had been crowded with work. There are some busy people who have mastered the art of 'making time' for rest, but Wesley's skill in that direction was limited. As we watch his ceaseless activities we have sometimes wondered if he was afraid to be idle. Those who are acquainted with his more intimate correspondence will remember some sentences which seem to favour this theory. In a letter written in 1746 he says: 'To this day I have abundantly more temptation to lukewarmness than to impetuosity; to be a saunterer *inter sylvas Academicas*, a philosophical sluggard, than an itinerant preacher. And, in fact, what I now do is so exceeding little, compared with what I am convinced I ought to do, that I am often ashamed before God, and know not how to lift up mine eyes to the height of heaven.' This is an almost startling revelation. But this letter is not the only place where he makes a similar statement. Whatever may have been his natural love of ease, he conquered it. No man has more fully realized the ideal of the worker contained in Ignatius Loyola's *Life*. He read that book on his way from Evesham to Bristol in August, 1742, and he must have consented to the declaration: 'the workers in the Lord's vineyard should have but one foot on earth; the other should be raised to travel forward.'

When trying to estimate the weight of the burden resting on John Wesley at this time we must remember that, in addition to his evangelizing work, and his care of all the Societies, he was either engaged on, or preparing for, important literary work. If we glance into the schoolroom at Kingswood we shall find evidence of that fact. We shall see English and Latin books which he has compiled for the use of the boys.[1] It is with special interest that we note the publication of the second volume of his *Sermons on Several Occasions*. In *John*

[1] See Green's *Bibliography*, Nos. 112–117. In 1749 he added to the list. See Nos. 128–130.

Wesley and the Methodist Societies we explained the reasons why these volumes of sermons were published[1] but we must now emphasize a feature of this second volume which is often overlooked. We are so accustomed to regard the *First Four Volumes of Wesley's Sermons* as containing 'a code of doctrine' that we fail to remember the fact that, out of the twelve sermons in the second volume, nine are *Discourses on our Lord's Sermon on the Mount;* and that in the third volume, published in 1750, four more sermons on the same subject appear. When Wesley put aside his pen on December 11, 1749, he considered that he had 'finished' the task which the Conference had asked him to undertake. Three volumes containing thirty-six sermons had been prepared in order to show to the world the character of his own preaching. Of that number, thirteen were plain, practical 'discourses' such as he was accustomed to give in his early morning services, and in the Religious Societies before he separated from them. Yielding to importunity, in 1760, he issued a few sermons in a fourth volume, noting that probably they were the last he should publish. Without entering into a controversy which has been settled by the decision of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, it is well to remember that Wesley's *Standard Sermons* differ from such a code of doctrine as is contained in 'The Thirty-nine Articles' of the Church of England, and in 'The Articles of Religion' which have been adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church of America.

The publication of his *Sermons* was a duty which Wesley discharged because, by so doing, he complied with repeated requests, and rendered a much-needed service to the Methodist Societies. After the Conference of 1748 he wrote a letter to his friend Ebenezer Blackwell, who was a partner in Martin's bank Lombard Street, and who had often helped him in his enterprises. His country residence was at Lewisham, in Kent, and his pleasant home and beautiful gardens became Wesley's calm retreat when he wished to hide himself from the world and write for the Press without distraction. About the time we have reached, Wesley was brooding over a project which roused his enthusiasm. On August 14, 1748, he wrote to Blackwell about it. The letter must have amazed him. We think we can see his uplifted brow when reading these words:

[1] See p. 320.

'I have had some thoughts of printing, on a finer paper, and with a larger letter, not only all that we have published already, but, it may be, all that is most valuable in the English tongue, in threescore or fourscore volumes, in order to provide a complete library for those that fear God. . . . Whenever I can procure a printing press, types, and some quantity of paper, I can begin immediately. I am inclined to think several would be glad to forward such a design; and, if so, the sooner the better.' We think it probable that, notwithstanding his surprise, Blackwell encouraged him to proceed; for out of the suggestion came the *Christian Library*, the first volume of which was published early in 1749. We mention this 'prodigious' undertaking in order to show the projects that were engaging Wesley's attention in 1748, and will content ourselves by quoting Mr. Green's description of the complete scheme. He says that the 'Library consists exclusively of pieces of "Practical Divinity," beginning with the "Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers." The rest is selected from well-known English and a few Continental writers.' He continues, 'It is impossible to read over the list of authors and subjects without being impressed with the wide range from which the extracts are taken. The labour of condensation must have been very great. Many a folio has been brought down to the limits of Wesley's favourite handy duodecimo. . . . The work was prepared for the Press just as he could snatch time in travelling. He did not transcribe the passages, but only marked with his pen those which he wished to be printed, altering or adding a few words here and there. As he could not correct for the Press, that duty fell upon others; and he tells us that a hundred passages were left in that he had scratched out.'[1] Wesley lost £200 in carrying out this costly experiment.

Kingswood School being opened, John Wesley turned his face towards the North. He preached in Birmingham on June 29. He met an old friend there, Dr. Thomas Walker, of Steelhouse Lane, who had known him at Oxford, and who had found a room for the Society. On July 1, Sheffield was reached. In *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*[2] we have described the riot in Sheffield, in May, 1743, in which the first preaching-house was destroyed. The year following,

[1] Green's *Bibliography*, 62. [2] p. 120.

another was built on a site at the end of Pinstone Lane, near Burgess Street. Mr. James Bennet, a Sheffield cutler, contributed generously towards its erection.[1] The second 'House' ceased to be used by the Methodists; and in 1745 another was built in Pinstone Lane. On February 9, 1746, it was attacked by a large mob, and before the end of the week it was destroyed. The Justices of the Peace refused to interfere, but an appeal was made against them at the York Assizes, and they were compelled to rebuild the preaching-house. This vigorous action on the part of the Sheffield Methodists taught the magistrates a much-needed lesson. When John Wesley preached 'at the end of the house' on July 1, 1748, he had a quiet congregation.[2]

On Saturday, July 2, John Wesley reached Epworth, and preached to a large congregation. The next day he attended the service in the church. Mr. Romley, the curate, preached, but, as the rector was present, Wesley had once more the comfort of receiving the Lord's supper in Epworth Church. The Rev. Henry J. Foster tells us that the rector was the Hon. and Rev. John Hay. He was the third son of George, Earl of Kinnoul, and the grandson of the famous Harley, Earl of Oxford. He had received the living of Epworth on the presentation of George II.[3] On Wednesday, July 6, Wesley reached Grimsby, and preached in the large room over the old Town Hall. The room would not contain the congregation; many stood on the stairs and in the adjoining rooms, and many below in the street. He says: 'The fear of God has lately spread in an uncommon degree among this people also. Nor has Mr. Prince been able to prevent it, though he bitterly curses us in the name of the Lord.' Returning to Epworth, and visiting other places, on July 9 he reached Newcastle.

On Sunday, July 10, Wesley tells us that he began exhorting all that loved their own souls solemnly to renew their covenant with God. He explained the nature of that covenant on the mornings of the ensuing week. The spirit of Joseph

[1] We take this opportunity to correct a mistake in our account of the riot in 1743. In *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (p. 119) we should have said that James Bennet was Charles Wesley's host. We mentioned John Bennet. John Bennet was in Sheffield during the riots; afterwards he accompanied Charles Wesley to Newcastle-on-Tyne. Our description of him may therefore stand.

[2] See Rev. T. Alexander Seed's *History of Norfolk Street Chapel, Sheffield*, 16–18.

[3] See *W.H.S. Proceedings*, v. 203.

Alleine was upon him, and his exhortations produced a deep impression on the Newcastle Society. In visiting the classes he found not only an increase of number, but more of the life and power of religion among them than he had previously seen. He observed the same advance in all the country Societies, among which he spent one or more nights every week.

At the recent Conference the question of the condition of the country north of Newcastle was specially considered. For more than a year it was said the Methodists had preached in a large tract of land, stretching from Newcastle to Berwick-on-Tweed, without forming Societies. Almost all the seed had fallen by the wayside ; scarcely any fruit remained. This statement, made in the Conference, took possession of Wesley's mind ; he determined to ascertain its truth. On Monday, July 18, he began his journey towards the Border. He preached in Morpeth, at noon, to a somewhat turbulent crowd. Then he rode to Widdrington. The people, who knew of his coming, flocked in from all parts. He preached, and says, 'It was a delightful evening, and a delightful place, under the shade of tall trees. And every man hung upon the word ; none stirred his head or hand, or looked to the right or left, while I declared, in strong terms, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The next day he rode to Alnmouth, a small seaport town, famous for all kinds of wickedness. After dinner he went to Alnwick, where he preached at the Cross to a large congregation. One listener in the crowd specially attracts us. His name is Edward Stanley. He was the father of Jacob Stanley, who is so well known as one of the successors of John Wesley in the chair of the Methodist Conference. On Wednesday, Berwick was reached. Wesley sent a request to the commander of the garrison for permission to use a green near his house for the service. It was immediately granted. About two thousand people assembled there in the evening and listened to the sermon. The next day he preached again. When he arrived in the town on the previous day, he and his companions were 'hallooed all along the streets' ; but the scene soon changed—the very children were all silent ; the people pulled off their hats ; Wesley says that he and his companions might even have fancied themselves in Newcastle. At seven o'clock he preached once more to a far larger congregation. On his return to Newcastle he revisited Alnwick, and

preached 'to such a congregation as one would not have thought the whole town could afford.' He also preached at Long Horsley, receiving no opposition from the minister there, who was of 'a moderate spirit.' He said, 'I have done all I can for this people; and I can do them no good. Now let others try. If they can do any, I will thank them with all my heart.'

When Wesley returned to Newcastle he found it to be absolutely necessary to publish the following advertisement:

> Whereas one Thomas Moor, *alias* Smith, has lately appeared in Cumberland and other parts of England, preaching (as he calls it) in a clergyman's habit, and then collecting money of his hearers: This is to certify whom it may concern that the said Moor is no clergyman, but a cheat and impostor; and that no preacher in connexion with me either directly or indirectly asks money of any one.
>
> JOHN WESLEY.

Wesley resumed his work in Newcastle, but found it difficult to continue it because of a sharp attack of 'one of his old companions,' a distressing headache. He bore it for a time, but, after attending the monthly watch-night in Newcastle, he was obliged to rest for a day. He applied some of his own remedies, and recovered. His recovery, we surmise, was hastened by the excellent nursing of Mrs. Grace Murray. When he left Newcastle with Mr. Mackford, one of the trustees of the Orphan House, on August 16, Mrs. Murray accompanied them on their journey. We will leave the travellers to pursue their way.

On July 27 John Bennet was at Miller's Barn, in Rossendale. It was a small hamlet of four or five houses, in one of which William Darney then lived. Bennet preached there, but before the service a Methodist from Roughlee informed him that John Jane, one of the lay preachers, had been apprehended and taken before Justice Whitehead, who lived near Blackburn, and that it was probable that he would be sent 'into his own country' as a vagrant. John Jane was accepted by Wesley as a lay preacher in 1747. He is described by Atmore as 'a man of great simplicity, integrity, and uprightness.' His work was soon done; he died in 1750. The thought of him brings a sober light into the minds of those who know his history. Wesley says that he was the first Methodist to preach

in Colne, that relic of the old Roman colony. At the time we have reached the town was a Lancashire stronghold which was tenaciously held against the Methodists. We see John Jane innocently riding through Colne, seemingly without any intention of preaching there. But as he looked like a Methodist suspicion was roused. The men of the town, urged on by their parson, had made up their minds that no Methodist should preach in Colne. A mob gathered, swarmed around the traveller, and pulled him off his horse. They marched him to the stocks. Being fastened firmly, John Jane improved the opportunity he had not sought. He preached to his assailants, and vehemently exhorted them 'to flee from the wrath to come.' The mob being glad to get rid of him, let him go. It would seem that after a time he returned to Colne, and the incidents we are now to relate took place.

John Bennet was not personally acquainted with John Jane, but the news of his arrest, which was brought to Miller's Barn, troubled him. The next morning he rose early and set out for Hindon, thinking that he might hear more definite news concerning him. When he came there he found a number of people had assembled to watch for Jane's return from Blackburn. After some time spent in prayer it was determined that Bennet and another should ride on and meet him. They had not gone far from the house when they met a woman nearly 'lost for breath with walking,' who gasped out, 'Make haste, I pray you, for the men have almost killed the young man.' Bennet tried to console her by telling her not to be troubled, since the young man was in the hands of God. After going forward for some miles the horsemen saw three men on the road coming to meet them. As they drew near they were found to be the minister of Colne and his two assistants. Each was armed with a large pistol. Being asked what they had done with their prisoner, the minister said, 'Sent him to the house of correction at Preston.' John Bennet determined to go there. He found John Jane locked up with the prisoners. Once more he had found his opportunity. When Bennet saw him he was reading 'a good book' to the rest of the prisoners. They were listening attentively. Bennet would not at first interrupt the reading; but his heart was so full of desire to ease the reader of his grief that he felt he must make himself known to him. He went forward, and took the prisoner by

the hand and said, 'Brother Jane, how do you do?' The two preachers, as we have said, had never met before; but the 'Brother' went from the heart to the heart, and, says Bennet, 'we embraced each other with tears in our eyes.' The other prisoners drew near them. We can still hear the clanking of their fetters. Bennet says, 'They wondered much to hear us rejoice under such circumstances.' When we remember the loathsome conditions of the English jails and prisons of that period we share in the wonder.

The coming of John Bennet was opportune. John Jane had been ill fed and worse housed. Bennet says, 'He would have showed me his lodging room and his bed had I cared to have seen them, but the character I had heard before of them satisfied my curiosity. When he went to bed he was locked up in a dark place, and lay upon some straw with an old blanket over him. He was in all this resigned, and his soul was kept in peace.' John Bennet did not share his resignation. He saw the jailer and paid for a change of room, and the two friends had supper, and stayed together during the night.

John Bennet, who had some knowledge of law, got sight of the warrant on which John Jane had been committed. In it he was described as 'A very disorderly person, wandering about and giving no good account of himself, and occasioning riots and disturbances in several parts of the said county of Lancaster, particularly at Colne, on Sunday last, occasioning great tumults, and disturbing the congregation about to attend Divine Service.' The charge was as ridiculous as that brought by the wolf against the lamb for troubling the stream. Bennet determined to see some magistrate who would accept bail for Jane's appearance at the next sessions. He was successful with Justice Whitehead, who had committed him. He took Bennet's single bail and wrote a few lines to the keeper of the jail to release the prisoner. On Saturday, July 30, the two friends left Preston, and reached Roughlee in the evening. Bennet preached there on Sunday in the morning, and then at Miller's Barn in the evening, and so concluded his journey of charity.[1]

While John Jane was passing through his sharp experiences, Wesley was visiting his ever-widening parish in the northern counties of England. On Wednesday, August 24, he

[1] John Bennet's MS. *Journal.*

arrived at Haworth; and in the evening he preached there to a congregation 'more than the church could contain.' The next morning the service began at five o'clock; and even then the church was nearly filled. During this visit it is probable that William Grimshaw described the condition of things in Colne and its neighbourhood. It is certain that Wesley made up his mind to ascertain the facts of the case by personal inquiry, for, after the morning service in Haworth church, he and Grimshaw, with Grace Murray, set out for Roughlee, where Thomas Colbeck was to meet them. Colbeck was a young local preacher, one of Grimshaw's travelling companions, who had introduced Methodism into several villages in the neighbourhood. As Wesley and his companions rode towards Roughlee they were stopped again and again by friendly people, who entreated them not to go any farther. They were told that a large mob from Colne was on the road before them. But the kindly counsel was not taken. The two horsemen rode on. Pulling bridle a little later, they met with some people who told them that the mob had not yet reached Roughlee, so they rode on quickly that they might get there before the Colne crowd arrived. In this they were successful, and Wesley, finding the place quiet, began to preach shortly after noon. He had about half finished his discourse when the Colne mob came pouring down the hill like a torrent.[1]

As we have followed Wesley in his fearless evangelizing work we have met with many mobs; but the Colne mob possesses characteristics which give it some claim to pre-eminence. It was carefully organized, and its work was not confined to Colne. Its operations were carried on over a considerable space of country, out of which it was determined to expel by violence all Methodist preachers and those who followed them. We have already met its 'Commander-in-Chief.' We have seen him 'armed with a large pistol,' passing along the road from Preston. He is the Rev. George White, the curate of Colne. Mr. Laycock in his *Methodist Heroes in the Great Haworth Round*, describes him accurately as 'a choice specimen of the worst class of clergy in his day.' He had been educated for the Roman Catholic priesthood at Douay College, in France. But he had scruples, and recanted. Archbishop Potter

[1] From Grace Murray's description of the disturbance we find that William Grimshaw persuaded her to remain at Roughlee. The time of waiting for Wesley's return was spent in prayer. See *Methodist Recorder*, Winter No., 1902, p. 25.

recommended him for preferment in the Church of England to the Vicar of Whalley, and he became curate of Colne and Marsden, on the north-east border of Lancashire. He frequently abandoned his parish for weeks together. On one occasion, it is said, he read the Burial Service more than twenty times in a single night over the graves of parishioners who had been interred in his absence. But, if we may justly accuse him of the neglect of his clerical duties, no one can say that he showed any lack of energy when Methodists were to be persecuted. He preached against them, raised and led mobs against them, and displayed extraordinary energy in his attempts to exterminate them.

We do not question the skill of Mr. White in mob-raising. He had a considerable power of appeal, as witness the following 'proclamation': 'Notice is hereby given, if any man be mindful to enlist into His Majesty's Service, under the command of the Rev. Mr. George White, Commander-in-Chief, John Bannister, Lieut.-General of His Majesty's forces for the defence of the Church of England, and the support of the manufactory in and about Colne, both which are now in danger, &c., &c.; let them now repair to the Drum-head at the Cross, when each man shall have a pint of ale in advance, and other proper encouragements.' The linking of 'the support of the manufactory' with 'the defence of the Church of England' shows that Mr. White was not deficient in the wisdom of the serpent; but his master-stroke was clearly the 'pint of ale in advance,' and the 'other proper encouragements.' The information about drum-signal and the place of assembling reveals Mr. White's care of details. Under his skilful guidance the Colne mob attained a high standard of discipline; when it was on the march it became the terror of neighbouring towns and villages.

The conduct of the mob on that day must have given its Commander-in-Chief, Mr. George White, great satisfaction. That feeling would not be diminished when he received a letter from Wesley describing the proceedings at Roughlee and Barrowford. It was dated August 26, 1748, and must be quoted.

SIR,—Yesterday, between twelve and one o'clock, while I was speaking to some quiet people, without any noise or tumult, a drunken

rabble came, with clubs and staves, in a tumultuous and riotous manner, the captain of whom, Richard B[annister] by name, said he was deputy-constable, and that he was come to bring me to you. I went with him; but I had scarce gone ten yards when a man of his company struck me with his fist in the face with all his might; quickly after another threw his stick at my head. I then made a little stand; but another of your champions, cursing and swearing in the most shocking manner, and flourishing his club over his head, cried out, 'Bring him away.'

With such a convoy I walked to Barrowford, where they informed me you was, their drummer going before, to draw all the rabble together from all quarters.

When your deputy had brought me into the house, he permitted Mr. Grimshaw, the minister of Haworth, Mr. Colbeck, of Keighley, and one more to be with me, promising that none should hurt them. Soon after you and your friends came in, and required me to promise I would come to Roughlee no more. I told you I would sooner cut off my hand than make any such a promise; neither would I promise that none of my friends should come. After abundance of rambling discourse (for I could keep none of you long to any one point) from about one o'clock till between three and four (in which one of you frankly said, 'No; we will not be like Gamaliel, we will proceed like the Jews'), you seemed a little satisfied with my saying, 'I will not preach at Roughlee at this time.' You then undertook to quiet the mob, to whom you went and spoke a few words, and their noise immediately ceased. I then walked out with you at the back door.

I should have mentioned that I had several times before desired you to let me go, but in vain; and that when I attempted to go with Richard B[annister] the mob immediately followed, with oaths, curses, and stones; that one of them beat me to the ground; and, when I rose again, the whole body came about me like lions, and forced me back into the house.

While you and I went out at one door, Mr. Grimshaw and Mr. Colbeck went out at the other. The mob immediately closed them in, tossed them to and fro with the utmost violence, threw Mr. Grimshaw down, and loaded them both with dirt and mire of every kind, not one of your friends offering to call off your bloodhounds from the pursuit.

The other quiet, harmless people, who followed me at a distance, to see what the end would be, they treated still worse, not only by the connivance, but by the express order, of your deputy. They made them run for their lives amidst showers of dirt and stones, without any regard to age or sex. Some of them they trampled in the mire and dragged by the hair, particularly Mr. Mackford, who came with me from Newcastle. Many they beat with their clubs without mercy. One they forced to leap down (or they would have thrown him headlong) from a rock, ten or twelve feet high, into the river. And when he crawled out, wet and bruised, they swore they would throw him in again, which they were hardly persuaded not to do. All this time

you sat well pleased close to the place, not attempting in the least to hinder them.

And all this time you was talking of justice and law! Alas, sir, suppose we were Dissenters (which I deny), suppose we were Jews or Turks, are we not to have the benefit of the laws of our country? Proceed against us by the law, if you can or dare; but not by lawless violence; not by making a drunken, cursing, swearing, riotous mob both judge, jury, and executioner. This is flat rebellion against God and the King, as you may possibly find to your cost.[1]

'All this time you sat well pleased.' That sentence catches the eye. We think it also describes White's feelings when reading Wesley's letter. He had done his best to stir up the mob, and he had met with unquestionable success. Before this riot, on July 24, he had preached against the Methodists at Colne; on August 7 he had repeated the sermon at Marsden. We note that his text was, 'For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.' His pulpit harangue pleased him so much that he published it on November 7, 1748, with an epistle dedicatory to the Archbishop of Canterbury. It must be remembered that Dr. Herring was the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1748. We have already described his attitude towards Methodism.[2] White's choice of a text shows his lack of humour and caution. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Colne mob he ought to have felt some twinges of conscience when denouncing the authors of tumults.[3]

Glancing at the pages of John Wesley's *Journal*, we pause at an entry he makes in 1752. 'We rode to Roughlee, and found a large, serious, and quiet congregation. There have been no tumults since Mr. White was removed. . . . It was his manner first to hire, and then to head, the mob, when they and he were tolerably drunk. But he drank himself first into a jail and then into his grave.'[4] That is a dismal statement, without any relief. In substance it is repeated in a footnote which appears in *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*. But the author has extended his paragraph. In continuation he says: 'He was interred in his own church, April 29, 1751. It is reported, and believed in the neighbourhood of Colne,

[1] See *Journal*, iii. 370–371; Laycock's *Methodist Heroes*, 60–62, 64–65.
[2] See *ante*, 17.
[3] White's sermon, and Grimshaw's reply to it, are in the Library of the Wesleyan Conference Office, City Road, London.
[4] iv. 31.

that Mr. White, when on his dying bed, sent for Mr. Grimshaw, expressed his concern for having opposed him, being fully convinced of the impropriety of his former conduct, and begged the assistance of his instructions and prayers.'[1] We hope that the report was true. This reference to White's death is anticipatory; we shall have to meet him again as a fierce persecutor.

[1] Vol. i., 261 *note*.

IX

GRACE MURRAY

In the preceding chapter we have noticed the presence of Grace Murray at Roughlee, and have seen that by reason of William Grimshaw's advice she stayed there and did not witness the riot at Barrowford. She welcomed the return of Wesley, Grimshaw, and Colbeck; and, in her *Diary*, she describes the treatment they had received. We watch her as she greets Wesley on his arrival; and many thoughts arise in our mind. We have now reached a stage in our description of the experiences of John Wesley when it is necessary to face a question that has caused much controversy. We approach the subject with reluctance; but it is impossible to ignore it. The relations between John Wesley and Grace Murray have been discussed for many years, and it is difficult to treat the subject without prejudice. We cannot at this point examine the whole of the case, but we will try to state the condition of affairs between John Wesley and Grace Murray, existing at the time we have reached.

In the winter number of *The Methodist Recorder*, published in 1902, Mr. Curnock, its editor, wrote an article which attracted considerable attention. Its sub-title was, 'The Story of Grace Murray.' From 'Diaries' and 'Letters' in the possession of Mr. R. Thursfield Smith and Mr. Russell Colman he gathered materials which he used with much skill in Grace Murray's defence. Mr. Smith lent him leaves of the 'Diaries.' He describes them as 'little leaves of paper, yellow with age, and filled with the tremulous writing of an ancient lady whose eyesight was rapidly failing.' Reading the diary written in her extreme old age, he gathered together what he deemed to be 'reliable traditions' concerning her life at Chapel-en-le-Frith. He also considered there was little difficulty in picturing the woman who for many years 'wielded so gracious an influence in the evangelical circles of English Christian life.'

The evidence contained in Mr. Curnock's article is wholly in favour of Grace Murray's conduct in her relations with John Wesley at the period we are considering. It would be unfair to her to express an opinion on the case without reading his article. We are bound to say, however, that it is difficult to follow Grace Murray's account owing to the absence of dates which fix the sequence of events. We note, for instance, that the events which happened in 1749 are not distinctly separated from those which occurred in the previous year ; and, further, that a visit to Ireland, and another to Ludlow with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wesley, who were married on April 8, 1749, share the same fate. It needs a close acquaintance with Methodist history to escape the confusion caused by dateless documents. In justice to John Wesley it is also necessary to say that, as the editor of his *Journal*, Mr. Curnock signed the ' Preface ' to the first volume of the standard edition in October, 1909—that is, seven years after his article in *The Methodist Recorder* was written. In the *Journal* there are several important editorial notes which modify some of Mr. Curnock's earlier opinions. That fact must be taken into account.

Mr. Curnock, in his article in *The Methodist Recorder*, states a side of the case which must be considered. But, some years before he wrote that article, the Rev. Luke Tyerman, the well-known Methodist historian, had gathered together evidence which brings before us another view of the circumstances we are about to state. He read the *Memoirs* of Grace Murray published by her son ; but he also studied a pamphlet by John Russel Smith, of Soho Square, London, which purported to be a publication of a manuscript attributed to John Wesley, which is in the British Museum. Mr. Tyerman was a keen searcher after broadsheets, pamphlets, and books which dealt with the origin and progress of Methodism. He went to the British Museum, and carefully compared Smith's pamphlet with the Wesley manuscript. He found that the latter was not in Wesley's handwriting, but that it was clear that it had been read by him, for some revisions appeared in it which were, in his opinion, certainly written by Wesley. He was a competent judge. In comparing the printed pamphlet with the original document he found, that with a few unimportant exceptions, including one or two omissions, the original document had been ' faithfully and correctly '

reproduced in Smith's book. With the information he had gained he proceeded to give an account of incidents connected with the courtship of John Wesley and Grace Murray which it is difficult to harmonize with some of the statements contained in *The Methodist Recorder* article. It is well known that Mr Tyerman was a somewhat aggressive critic of John Wesley's actions; but no one can read his account of the Grace Murray episode without perceiving that his sympathies are with Wesley.[1]

In 1910 a book was published in London entitled *John Wesley's Last Love.* It was written by Dr. Augustin Leger, a Frenchman, who occupies a high place among the students of Wesley's life and work. We are especially indebted to him for the full and accurate reproduction of the British Museum manuscript mentioned by Tyerman. It is enriched with notes taken from the Standard *Journal* of John Wesley, and from other documents. These illuminating paragraphs, gathered from many sources, occur throughout the whole volume. Dr. Leger avoided the example set by men who have aspired to write on Wesley without consulting those who know most about him. In his Preface he acknowledges the help he had received from the writings of Mr. Curnock, Mr. Telford, and Mr. George Stampe, and from the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society.* We cannot accept all the opinions expressed in his book, but no one can read it carefully without seeing that its contents must be weighed by those who wish to understand a complicated and somewhat bewildering case.

In our attempt to unravel a tangled skein we will now fix our attention on the opening stage of the love-affairs of John Wesley and Grace Murray, leaving later events to be treated in the order of their succession. When we saw Grace Murray riding with Wesley and Grimshaw to Roughlee we wondered why she should be with them on such a perilous enterprise; but when we became acquainted with the foreground of that event our wonder ceased. It is not necessary to explore the whole of that foreground. It will be enough to say that when we catch sight of Grace Murray at Roughlee in 1748 she was a widow of about thirty-three years of age. She was in domestic charge of Wesley's Orphan House in Newcastle, and was a faithful and efficient housekeeper. We will take Wesley's

[1] See Tyerman's *Life and Times of John Wesley*, ii. 48–57.

description of her in this capacity. He says, 'she has every qualification I desire. She understands all I want to have done. She is remarkably neat in person, in cloaths, in all things. She is nicely frugal, yet not sordid. She has much common sense: contrives everything for the best; makes everything go as far as it can go; foresees what is wanting and provides it in time; does all things quick and yet without hurry. She is a good work-woman; able to do the finest, ready to do the coarsest work: Observes my rules, when I am absent as well as when I am present: And takes care that those about her observe them, yet seldom disobliges any of them.'[1] An attempt has been made to elevate the social position of Grace Murray at the time when she was at the Orphan House; but, after Wesley's description, those attempts are unnecessary. We can imagine a twentieth-century mistress lingering over his 'testimonial,' lost in surprise and envy. Wesley accepted the statement that she was his 'servant,' but made light of it. We presume that he anticipated the modern conviction that every position in life is honourable if its duties can be, and are, honourably fulfilled.

In addition to being an exceptionally efficient housekeeper, Grace Murray was an admirable nurse. Wesley says that as a nurse she was careful in the last degree, indefatigably patient, and inexpressibly tender, also that she was quick, cleanly, and skilful. When her domestic work was done she found leisure for work among the Methodist Societies. In April, 1742, we find her name in John Wesley's list of the leaders of the bands at the Foundery, London.[2] When she came to the Orphan House she continued her work among the women-bands in Newcastle and the neighbourhood. She was so successful as an evangelist that Wesley sometimes employed her to 'regulate the bands' in other parts of the country. He bears high testimony to her spirituality and her extraordinary success. Our admiration is increased when we remember that at the time when she was helping so many in the struggles of the spiritual life she was fighting a hard and long-continued battle with religious doubt. Sometimes she thought the victory was won; then the star of hope faded. But she kept on her work, and tried to clear out of the paths of others the difficulties that encumbered her own. She was a

[1] Dr. Leger's *John Wesley's Last Love*, 70. [2] Stevenson's *City Road Chapel*, 29.

Christian woman of a high type, and possessed John Wesley's entire confidence.

Soon after she became a widow, and removed to the Orphan House, she had several offers of marriage. She had much personal charm, and we do not wonder at the impression she produced on men ; but she had made up her mind to remain single, and devote herself to her work in the Orphan House, the classes, and the bands. She persisted for some time in this resolution. Then the crisis came. She modified her views ; and now the path to Roughlee lies before us.

It will be remembered that when John Wesley came back from his visit to the towns near the Border, the sickness that had weakened him for several months compelled him to rest after his return to the Orphan House. Grace Murray nursed him ; and we presume it was then he found her ' inexpressibly tender.' For some time he had been thinking about her as a wife, but now the critical moment came. He declared his love. The effect of this declaration filled her with amazement. She said, ' This is too great a blessing for me ; I can't tell how to believe it. This is all I could have wished for under heaven, if I had dared to wish for it.' John Wesley's further record is : ' From that time I conversed with her as my own. The night before I left Newcastle, I told her, " I am convinced God has called you to be my fellow labourer in the gospel. I will take you with me to Ireland in the spring. Now we must part for a time. But, if we meet again, I trust we shall part no more." She begged we might not part so soon, saying, " It was more than she could bear." Upon which I took her with me through Yorkshire and Derbyshire, where she was unspeakably useful both to me and to the Societies.' And that explains among other things, why we have met her at Roughlee.[1]

We must now pause for a moment to record something that occurred at the Orphan House in 1746. John Bennet was for a long time in the sick-room there ; he was nursed by Grace Murray. He was much impressed by her kindness, and when he recovered they parted as friends. For nearly two years they corresponded with each other. His letters contained, from time to time, sentences, the meaning of which could not be mistaken ; but Grace Murray resolutely ignored them in her

[1] See Dr. Leger's *John Wesley's Last Love*, 1–2.

correspondence with him. As we watch her reading the letters we think she lingers over those sentences without displeasure. John Bennet's illness, and his frequent correspondence with her, must be remembered as we continue our story of events, which Mr. Curnock has well named 'A tragedy of errors.'

After the riot at Barrowford, Wesley, Grace Murray, and Mr. Mackford visited several places in Yorkshire. At Miller's Barn, in Rossendale, they met John Bennet. On August 31 they arrived at Bennet's home in Chinley. Two days later John Wesley left Chinley and set out for London. When he said farewell to his friends he asked John Bennet 'to take great care of Mrs. Murray'; which very thing he was zealous to do. Mr. Mackford felt that he must get back to his business in Newcastle; so he rode away to the north, and left Grace Murray and John Bennet to enjoy each other's society. On Wednesday, September 7, they rode together to Buxton; and the next day to Taddington. The road to Taddington from Buxton lies through Ashwood Dale, famous for its 'romantic beauties.' Topley Pike, with its precipices, marks the way, and whispers its warnings to reckless climbers. Then comes the steep ascent to Taddington. It claims to be 'the highest village in England.' Those who have toiled to it on a hot summer day will admit the claim at once. Mr. Croston describes it as 'a cold, bleak, stony-looking village, with a fine old Gothic church standing in the midst of a field a short distance back from the way. The road commands a wide extent of country, bounded by a vast chain of rugged hills and barren moorlands.' Near the church stands a fine pillar similar to the beautifully carved pillar in Bakewell churchyard.[1]

Grace Murray and John Bennet rode on slowly, and then they began to talk freely together about hopes that had long lingered in Bennet's mind. We have not found any decisive evidence that Bennet was acquainted with Grace Murray's informal engagement to Wesley, but a sentence in her description of the conversation shows that Wesley was in her mind. We will give the description in her own language.

> Mr. Bennet and I travelled into Derbyshire. It was now Mr. Bennet's opportunity to know my mind as to our becoming engaged

[1] Croston's *On Foot through the Peak*, 339.

to each other, and he said God gave me to him for a wife in answer to his prayer on the occasion when he was so dangerously ill at Newcastle, at which time he cried out, ' My pain is gone. I am well.' This and many other things he used as arguments to convince me. I told him that I could not give him my answer, for if I were to marry it would take away my usefulness to God's cause, I feared, and than that I would rather die. He said that it would never do so, as I should go about with him, and that there was as much need of usefulness in his circuit as in any other. Still I objected, and said I could not marry without Mr. Wesley's consent; yet he argued with me until I was brought to reason upon the matter.

The next day we were to set out for Leeds, in Yorkshire, on my way home. That night Mr. Bennet had the most surprising dream that I ever knew. I have it by me now, but it is too tedious to mention here. I could not get over it. He said, ' Take care that you do not fight against God.' I said, ' You are a man of fortune, and I have no fortune, but a child to keep.' And he answered, ' I know it well, and I want no fortune but yourself. I will take care of your child.' All this made against me. I could not get over it. Then I said, ' If Mr. Wesley will give his consent, I will yield.' He said, ' I will write him this night, and let him know.' So on this I partly gave him my promise.[1]

The statement we have quoted does not greatly help us to decide the important question, Did Grace Murray inform John Bennet before ' partly giving him her promise,' that she was already engaged to John Wesley? The agreement between them to ask Wesley's consent carries us a little way towards an answer; but the most serious part of the conversation is the assertion of Grace Murray that she feared, if she were to marry, it would take away her usefulness to God's cause and that she would rather die than make that sacrifice. A person possessed of abnormal charity might suggest she meant that, if she married Bennet instead of Wesley, the calamity she dreaded might occur. We will give her the benefit of the doubt; but we are haunted by the thought that she did not tell Bennet the whole state of the case. Up to this point our association with John Bennet has caused us to look on him with an ever-increasing respect. If he knew all about the relations between Wesley and Grace Murray and yet pushed his suit, that respect would be lessened.

The letters to Wesley were written. We cannot say when they reached him. On September 2 he had set out for London, and arrived at the Foundery two days after that date. Letters

[1] See Mr. Curnock's article in *The Methodist Recorder*, Winter Number, 1902, 25. It must be remembered that this statement, taken from an old Diary, was written long after the events occurred.

then travelled slowly. But they reached him. This is Wesley's statement: 'I left her in Cheshire with John Bennet and went on my way rejoicing. Not long after I received a letter from John Bennet and another from her. He desired my consent to marry her. She said, "She believed it was the will of God." I was utterly amazed: but wrote a mild answer to both, supposing they were married already. She replied in so affectionate a manner that I thought the whole design was at an end.'[1] By 'the whole design' we presume that Wesley means the design of the marriage between Grace Murray and John Bennet. If he came to that conclusion he was mistaken.

[1] Dr. Leger's *John Wesley's Last Love*, 2.

X

TOIL AND TROUBLERS

At the close of John Wesley's letter to White, of Colne, there is a veiled threat of legal proceedings which might be taken against the persecutor of the Methodists. It was no more than a hint, for Wesley knew that the success of such proceedings was doubtful. At that time there were only a few places in the country where it was probable that magistrates would defend the Methodists against mob violence. At Quarter Sessions and Assizes it was possible that justice might be done, as we have seen in the case of the Sheffield preaching-house. In those days, however, there was a tribunal which was often called 'the refuge of the oppressed'; it was the Court of King's Bench, in London. But between magistrates and the courts of appeal there lay a path strewn with hindrances. There was sure to be delay, and a need of great expenditure of money. It is no wonder that Wesley paused before he made up his mind to commence legal proceedings against White and the rioters at Roughlee and Barrowford.

While Wesley was reflecting, there was one man at least who was determined to act. John Bennet, before he entered on his business as a carrier, had served for some time as a justice's clerk, and his short legal training had made him familiar with the processes of prosecutions. Acting with caution, he made inquiries and tried to elicit information which would justify the commencement of proceedings against the Commander-in-Chief of the Colne mob. On September 19 he went to Preston and consulted a lawyer. He tells us that, in the course of the conversation, he had 'a secret check,' at which we do not wonder. He hesitated to proceed, but did not abandon his intention.

On October 7, 1748, we see Bennet in Preston. The time had come when John Jane had to appear at the Sessions, and he wished to stand by him and strengthen him by his sympathy.

His experiences in Preston cast light on the administration of justice in those far-off times; they, therefore, possess exceptional interest. Seeking for Mr. Whitehead, whom we have met in the course of the former proceedings against John Jane, Bennet went to an inn, but failed to find him. But, standing together at the door, he caught sight of 'two of the greatest enemies of the Methodists,' who were in close consultation. One of them was the foreman of the Grand Jury; the other was the ringleader of the Roughlee mob. It was not difficult to divine the topic of their conversation. Passing by them Bennet went to the office of an attorney, Mr. Fenton, whom he knew, and asked his advice on the subject of the suppression of the Colne mob. Mr. Fenton, going to the root of the matter, told him that he ought to indict the Colne minister. He determined to do so. While the document was being prepared, Mr. Whitehead rushed into the office to get an indictment drawn against John Jane for preaching. Following Bennet's account, in his MS. *Journal*, we conclude that White was with him. The clerk told Whitehead that he could not indict Jane for that offence. Bennet, continuing his account, says: 'The Parson said then the Devil was in it. He desired paper, and pen and ink, and said he would draw one himself, for the foreman of the jury said he would bring in his Bill, let it be what it would. He began to write something, but no man could understand what it was, nor what he meant; only he mentioned John Jane. Mr. Fenton, our attorney, looked over his shoulder, and said, "Sir, you spelled Jane wrong"; upon which Mr. Fenton showed him the indictment drawn up against himself by John Jane for putting him into the stocks, &c. Mr. Whitehead reads it over, throws it down, and goes down the stairs with all the haste imaginable.'

From Mr. Fenton's office we must now adjourn to the court. As might be expected, the Grand Jury quashed John Jane's indictment against White. Bennet says, 'We could have no justice done us by the jury, though all the bench seemed on our side.' We confess our surprise at his closing words. The vision of a bench determined to do justice to the Methodists at that time excites our astonishment. Our surprise increases as we watch the further proceedings. When the case of John Jane came up, he surrendered to the court. White appeared against him, and asked that his 'recognizance' should be

continued ; that is, that the document by which Jane had bound himself to appear before the court should still remain in force. But the bench would not grant White's appeal, and John Jane was discharged. A number of the Roughlee Methodists were in the court, and we can see their glad glances at each other, and at Bennet and Jane, when the decision of the bench was declared.

John Bennet must have been encouraged by the result of the proceedings at the Preston Sessions. But the action of the Grand Jury convinced him that the surest way to get a verdict against the organiser of the Colne mob was to remove the case to the courts in London. He was corresponding with John Wesley, and both of them wrote to Mr. Glanville, a barrister in London, and asked his advice on the best manner of proceeding in their attempt to effect a redress of their grievances. We linger for a moment on Mr. Glanville's name. He was a man who for many years had been eminent for an utter disregard of all religion. But a lady, who was unable to argue with him on the questions he raised, gave him Wesley's *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, and asked him to read it. He did so, and was thoroughly convinced that there was 'reality in religion.' He abandoned his former views. Wesley, meeting him, talked with him for an hour, and then took him to a watch-night. He stayed to the end, and was much affected. Wesley's hope concerning him was fulfilled: 'Let but a little seed be sown, and God is able to give it an increase.'[1] John Bennet's letter to Mr. Glanville was written on October 8. It met with an immediate response. Mr. Glanville took up the case sympathetically, and advised an appeal to the London Courts.

Bennet was anxious to proceed, but soon found that the difficulties in the way were more than could be surmounted at that time. The chief of them was the lack of money to carry on the suit. In his letter to Wesley, written from Chinley on October 22, 1748, he says: 'I desire more particular directions from you before I proceed. You say, "The fees must be regularly paid to the counsel." But where is the money? Indeed, I know not. The Societies in these parts are very poor, and I find many startle at the thought of a Chancery suit, they supposing it will be so expensive. It cost Roughlee

[1] For Mr. Glanville, see John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 328, 389, *note*.

before, when W. Darney was abused, about £20. It has cost loosing J. Jane, at this time, betwixt four and five pounds, and I fear it will be difficult to procure money here unless some other Societies are acquainted therewith and assist them. I believe in a little time I can raise £20 or £30 in these parts, and that will be all. I am willing to do what is in my power, but not to go on my own head to enter such an action without further advice and a more unanimous consent of my brethren. Who must lodge the information? In whose name must this action be carried on? Mr. Grimshaw and Mr. Colbeck seem unconcerned in the matter, though they were the chief sufferers. . . . As soon as you receive this letter, please let me know what I must do, and how I must proceed in this affair, and I shall be ready to obey you.'[1] The conduct of John Bennet throughout this affair increases our respect for him. We know that, in some cases, he defrayed the cost of actions against mobs that had disturbed Methodist congregations; but the thought of a law suit in London daunted him. If he had been strongly supported by the Societies he would have proceeded against White and his ruffians, but the poverty of the Societies had to be considered. Without considerable pecuniary assistance from the Methodists of other neighbourhoods he felt that his efforts to secure the protection of the law for the people of Colne and its neighbourhood must proceed with caution. But he was determined that he would not abandon the task he had undertaken until it was clear that its accomplishment was hopeless.

It is not essential that we should pursue the subject of the projected proceedings against George White. The preparations for the suit dragged their slow length along. Whatever may have been Grimshaw's attitude at the time when Bennet wrote to Wesley, it is certain that afterwards he took a keen interest in the appeal to the law-courts. But in December, 1748, Mr. Glanville died. In April, 1751, White passed away at Langroyd Hall, near Colne; and so the case was removed beyond earthly jurisdiction.

In following the Colne case we have noticed that the progress of the legal proceedings was retarded by the straitened financial resources of the prosecutors. John Bennet's letter to Wesley shows that fact. But it cannot be doubted that the popular

[1] *Methodist Recorder*, Winter Number, 1902, 30.

opinion was that Wesley and his lay preachers were well paid for their work, and that they were supported by the liberal contributions of their people. Have we any evidence of the existence of that delusion? It will be remembered that George White preached a sermon at Colne, and repeated it at Marsden. It was afterwards published, and was dedicated to Dr. Herring, who was then the Archbishop of Canterbury.[1] In those days, when 'dedications' were common, it was supposed that those who permitted them by that act showed their agreement with the sentiments contained in a book or pamphlet. We hesitate to say that the Archbishop's acceptance of White's sermon signified his acceptance of the extraordinary statements it contained. Still, it is certain that the 'dedication' of White's pulpit-harangue would impress unwary readers. Few copies have escaped the ravages of time. One of them lies before us. It is accompanied by an 'Answer' written by William Grimshaw. These two documents will give us the information we need.

In reading White's sermon we have wondered what the Archbishop thought of the statement that 'the Act of Toleration was chiefly calculated for the further improvement of trade.' Was he impressed by the preacher's conclusions that the Act, therefore, did not apply to the Methodists because they directly opposed trade; and that it was never the meaning of the Legislature to tolerate the Methodists, but rather 'to encourage daily industry and labour for the public good'? This statement concerning the real purpose of the Act of Toleration enables us to judge the fitness of White to give an opinion on the contents of an Act of Parliament. But our chief interest in him at this moment is to find out what he thought of the financial position of the Methodist preachers, including George Whitefield. In a note appended to his sermon he refers to John Wesley, George Whitefield, and the lay preachers, and accuses them of 'cozening' a handsome subsistence out of their 'irregular expeditions.' Then, not content with bare statements, he descends to particulars, and says:

> No satisfactory account has been given us of Mr. Whitefield's disbursements in Georgia, and I'm afraid by his late modest insinuations, in or about the Highlands of Scotland, of the want of £500 more (a sum we ministers in these parts seldom see, even after a regular

[1] See *ante*, 17.

conduct of many long years), he thinks the nation is become more and more fool foolish, and within the reach of his farther impositions. It appears from many very probable accounts that Mr. Wesley has in reality a better income than most of our bishops, tho' now and then (no great wonder) it costs him some little pains to escape certain rough compliments. As to the under lay-praters, I have reason to assert that, by means of a certain allowance from their schismatical general, a contribution from their very wise hearers, and the constant maintenance of themselves and horses, they may be supposed in a better way of living than the generality of our vicars and curates; and doubtless find it much more agreeable to their constitution to travel abroad at the expence of a sanctify'd face and a good assurance than to sweat ignominiously at the loom, anvil, and various other mechanic employments which Nature had so manifestly designed them for.

This vivid footnote would doubtless be read with eagerness by passionate lovers of scandal; but it brought down on White a keen and well-deserved chastisement. In 1749 William Grimshaw took up his pen, and wrote his *Answer to a Sermon lately Published against the Methodists*. It traverses the whole of White's allegations, and gives us valuable information on the subject of Methodist finance. White complains that he and those to whom he was speaking had not received from Whitefield any satisfactory account of his disbursements in Georgia. That is no cause for wonder. But Grimshaw showed that an account had been given to the authorities in Georgia. He reproduced the sworn information of three persons, who appeared before two of the Bailiffs of Savannah. They declared that they had carefully and strictly examined all the accounts relating to the Orphanage, for which Whitefield had collected money, from December 15, 1738, to January 1, 1745; and they swore 'that it doth not appear that the said Mr. Whitefield hath converted any part thereof to his own use and property; or charged the said House with any of his travelling, or other private expences: But on the contrary hath contributed to the said House many valuable benefactions.' This declaration was made on April 16, 1746; but it is clear that White was ignorant of its existence. If ignorance is a valid excuse for his statements, we will give him the benefit of the plea.

As to John Wesley and his income, Grimshaw, who was acquainted with his private affairs, easily refuted White's statement. He says that he was credibly informed that

Wesley's 'fellowship' was about £100 a year, but that £50 was deducted from that amount for non-residence. Then he continues: 'The remainder, with the profits arising from the sale of his books, are so entirely laid out in carrying on the great and good work he is engaged in, that he scarcely provides necessaries for himself. This is a true relation of that good man's estate, of whom you are pleased roundly and falsely to affirm "that he has a better income than most of our bishops."' As to the lay preachers, who, according to White, were supposed to be 'in a better way than the generality of our vicars and curates,' it is certain that White was unacquainted with that 'Rule of a Helper' which commands, 'Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry or clothes when you need them, it is good. But not silver or gold. Let there be no pretence to say we grow rich by the gospel.' That rigorous 'rule' was in active operation at the time White preached his sermon. Grimshaw, at a stroke, demolished his accusation.[1] We cannot believe that the Archbishop of Canterbury saw White's *Sermon* before he accepted its 'dedication.' He was no friend to the Methodists, but he was accustomed to show his opposition in more honourable ways than those adopted by the curate of Colne.

From August 13 to October 8, 1748, Charles Wesley was in Ireland.[2] In Mr. Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland* there is a full account of this visit. We note that he preached several times in Cork, where the lay preachers had been carrying on successful pioneer work. There seemed to be a good prospect; but Mr. Crookshank warns us that the clouds were gathering for a great storm. He says that very soon after Charles Wesley left Cork a spirit of prejudice and hostility against Methodism arose in the city, and a storm of outrageous and destructive persecution burst on the Methodists. He adds that even when Charles Wesley was there, 'there were faint indications of what was coming notwithstanding his apparent popularity.'[3]

On Sunday, September 11, we see Charles Wesley in a state of rapture. In his hand he holds the Bishop of Exeter's late *Charge* to his clergy; having read it he thinks it 'worthy to be

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 217.

[2] In his *Journal* he says that on August 14 he met his brother in St. Patrick's; but John Wesley on that day was in Newcastle.

[3] Crookshank's *History*, i. 43.

written in letters of gold.' His enthusiasm was kindled by the following words:

> My brethren, I beg you will rise up with me against only moral preaching. We have been long attempting the reformation of the nation by discourses of this kind. With what success? Why, with none at all. On the contrary, we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. We must change our voice; we must preach Christ and Him crucified. Nothing but the Gospel is, nothing will be found to be, the power of God unto salvation besides. Let me, therefore, again and again request, may I not add, *let me charge you*, to preach Jesus, and salvation through His name; preach the Lord who bought us; preach redemption through His blood; preach the saying of the great High Priest, 'He that believeth shall be saved.' Preach repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.[1]

Is it any wonder that Charles Wesley was elated when he read these words? That the new Bishop of Exeter had entreated the clergy of his diocese to preach the doctrines the Wesleys had preached to the 'tinners' of Cornwall, in the midst of furious persecution, was indeed good news. The dark night was passing; the morning star of a new reformation shone in the sky. Remembering that George Lavington was the new bishop of Exeter, we hesitate to prolong Charles Wesley's cry of jubilation. We are convinced that Lavington would never have uttered the words we have quoted; and we will now refer to the strange circumstances that led to Charles Wesley's delusion.

It is true that in 1748 the charge read by Charles Wesley was published, and was attributed to the Bishop of Exeter. But it came from the pen of a man who could not resist the temptation to perpetrate a joke. The only excuse that can be made for him is that he never intended that the charge should be printed; the manuscript was only to be circulated among his friends for the increase of their gaiety. But a printer got hold of it; and, seeing it would make 'good copy,' he set it up and published it. Those who read it were deceived, and Dr. Lavington's wrath was raised when he found that people were calling him 'a Methodist.' He did well to be angry. Smarting under the reproach, he made it known that he considered that the Wesleys and Whitefield were responsible for issuing what became known as 'the false charge.' This

[1] See Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 31–32.

reckless accusation was spread abroad, and came to the ears of Lady Huntingdon. She was indignant; but she made full inquiries, and then wrote to Lavington and exonerated Wesley and Whitefield from the accusation. The bishop took no notice of her letter. As Whitefield was one of her chaplains, it was unlikely that she would cease to defend him. After waiting for some time, she wrote to Lavington again and threatened him with legal proceedings. It was then he awoke to the fact that it was dangerous to trifle with Lady Huntingdon. So he wrote to her the following letter, which she caused to be inserted in the leading journals of the day:

> The Bishop of Exeter having received the most positive assurance from the Countess of Huntingdon, and other respectable persons, that neither Mr. Whitefield nor Mr. Wesley, nor any one in connexion with, or authorized by them, had any concern in the fabrication and publication of a charge said to be delivered by him to the Clergy of his Diocese, takes this opportunity of apologizing to her Ladyship, and Messrs. Whitefield and Wesley, for the harsh and unjust censures which he was led to pass on them, from the supposition that they were in some measure concerned in, or had countenanced, the late imposition on the public.
>
> The Bishop of Exeter feels that it is imperative to make this concession to the Countess of Huntingdon; and requests her Ladyship and Messrs. Whitefield and Wesley will accept his unfeigned regret at having unjustly wounded their feelings, and exposed them to the odium of the world.[1]

The publication of his apology by Lady Huntingdon roused the anger of the Bishop of Exeter to white heat, and he determined to seize the first opportunity of revenge. In the following year he found it.

The records in John Wesley's *Journal* for the first fortnight in September are brief, but we are able to trace his route. He had much to think about as he rode along. He does not tell us when he received the letters of John Bennet and Grace Murray; but their contents must have depressed him. The light on his wanderings at this time has been considerably increased by the discovery of a fragment of his original *Journal*. It was his custom to revise the contents of that *Journal* before publishing the successive sections. When the Standard Edition of his *Journal* was in course of publication some fragments of

[1] *Life of Lady Huntingdon*, i. 96.

the manuscript document were discovered; they add much to the value of the closing volume.[1] Using the 'Fragment,' published in November, 1916, we find that John Wesley arrived in London from St. Albans between seven and eight o'clock in the morning of Sunday, September 14. He preached at West Street before noon, and at five o'clock in Moorfields to a larger congregation than he had seen there for some years. He had started from St. Albans at four o'clock, and we do not wonder that the old physical trouble returned, and that he had to nurse himself back into health. He was so much better the next day that he preached at Wapping in the evening; but he admits that he felt 'much weakness.' He consoled himself by thinking, 'If it be best, God is able to make me strong.' The next day he began visiting the classes. He was disappointed with their condition. From the beginning to the end of this stay in London we see little of his bright and hopeful spirit. There is one ray. When he visited the classes at Southwark he was refreshed. He records his opinion that the Southwark classes were the only part of the Society in London which increased daily. He imputed this prosperity chiefly to the zeal and vigilance of the leaders. They laboured in the work, and 'spared no care or pains to seek and save that which is lost.'

It was during this stay in London that John Wesley visited Lady Huntingdon at Chelsea. Whitefield was in England. When Wesley reached London he met Howell Harris, who gave him a message from Lady Huntingdon. He went to see her, and, at her request he preached several times to crowded and fashionable congregations that were accustomed to assemble at her house. Whitefield left for Scotland on September 3. It was four days after his departure that Wesley's first visit took place. He spent three hours with Lady Huntingdon, and they talked together 'as in the times that were past.' In the evening he preached at West Street Chapel. Several of Lady Huntingdon's friends were there. We are specially interested in one of them—Lady Bath, the daughter of Colonel Gumley. On Friday morning he went to Chelsea, and preached at Lady Huntingdon's to a fashionable audience. The next Sunday he preached twice 'in the fields,' and once at West Street. In the evening he went once more to Lady

[1] See Fragment III, Standard *Journal*, viii. 156–159.

Huntingdon's house and preached to the congregation there assembled. He says, 'After preaching they gathered round me on every side, and I was enabled to speak to their hearts. . . . Surely I am not come this warfare on my own cost. Now let God do as seemeth in His own eyes.' We surmise, from an incidental remark, that the relations between Lady Huntingdon and Wesley had not been so cordial as in other days; but they had a quiet talk together and misunderstandings were removed.[1]

On Monday, September 12, John Wesley set out for the West. The next day he preached 'in the new-built room' in Bristol. On Thursday he left Bristol. Riding to Langford he had a joyous surprise. A man called after him and told him that 'Mr. Thomson, of Cornwall,' was in a house to which he pointed. Wesley rode up to the door, and found his friend there. They spent an hour together 'in declaring to each other the wonderful things God had done.' It is probable that Thomson told him of the improved condition of affairs in Cornwall. Persecution had moderated, or ceased. It should be noted that the adversaries of Methodism could no longer avail themselves of the plea that the country was at war; and, therefore, that men could be 'pressed' for the Navy and Army. That weapon, which they had ruthlessly used, was falling from their hands. The 'preliminaries' of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had been signed in April, and the definitive treaty was on the eve of being concluded and signed.[2] Wesley could therefore proceed on his journey without any expectation of being clutched by magistrates and press-gangs. He rode on his way; and his expectations were realized. He met his friend Mr. Bennett, preached in the churches at Tresmere and St. Gennys, and 'in the fields' at many places without interruption. It was only at Newlyn that he received showers of dirt and stones from the 'rabble-rout.' But even there the assault died down before the service concluded. 'Then all were quiet and still; and some looked as if they felt what was spoken.' Mobs showed a certain amount of sagacity when they made it impossible for Wesley to be heard. Almost invariably a listening crowd was subdued by the spell of his extraordinary influence. Remembering the state of his health,

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, viii. 158, 159.

[2] The definitive treaty was signed on October 7. See Smollett's *History of England*, xi. 301–302.

and the pressure of his private cares, we wonder at the vigour he showed, during this visit. With charming *naïveté* he says: 'Believing my strength would not allow of preaching five times in the day, I desired John Whitford to preach at five.' That sentence has a tone of arrest which haunts us.

Richard Moss and John Slocomb had accompanied Wesley from Bristol. On the return journey Slocomb waited for them at Cullompton. Wesley and Moss left Crediton soon after sunset. The night was exceeding dark. Neither moon nor star appeared. The rain poured down; in the deep and narrow lanes it was scarcely possible to see the road. When the travellers were groping their way in one of these lanes they heard the sound of horses coming toward them. Then a voice cried, 'What have you got?' Wesley did not understand the meaning of that challenge, but Richard Moss came to his aid and replied, 'We have no panniers.' Upon which the man answered, 'Sir, I ask your pardon,' and went by very quietly. If the further conversation between the two preachers had been recorded we think it would have concerned the excellence of the 'rule' which forbade 'the buying or selling of uncustomed goods.' The two companions went on their journey; and a little before eight o'clock the moon rose. Then they rode cheerfully on, and before ten reached Cullompton.

On October 1 John Wesley arrived in Bristol. Until the end of the year the entries in his *Journal* lack the fullness that has so effectively guided us through the incidents of his life. His mind seems to have been burdened by a trouble he does not mention, but which we think we can detect. The few entries he makes are of considerable importance; we will note some of them. During the week after his arrival in Bristol he devoted his time to the visitation of the classes. He relied on the faithfulness of the leaders, and the loyalty of the members for the success of his work. Experience was constantly confirming his estimate of the high value of the class-meeting. The building of the 'New Room' must have interfered with the meetings in Bristol, and Wesley soon perceived a threatening danger. He faced it with his habitual courage. The method he adopted is shown in the *Journal*. He tells us that during this visitation he left out of the list of members 'every careless person, and everyone who wilfully and obstinately refused to meet his brethren weekly.' By

this means the number of members was reduced from nine hundred to about seven hundred and thirty.[1]

Leaving Bristol, Wesley rode towards London. He arrived there on October 15. On November 1 there was a solemn assembly at the West Street Chapel. It was All Saints' Day. For several years a service had been held there in commemoration of those who had passed away, and to the end of his life John Wesley remembered his old comrades and friends whose warfare was accomplished, and who were living in the light of eternity. He closes his brief record with the memorable words, 'Surely," right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."'

There was another solemn assembly in the West Street Chapel a few days afterwards. On Sunday, November 13, Sarah Peters, 'a lover of souls, a mother in Israel, went to rest.' We read Wesley's testimony concerning her with guiltless envy. What a revelation of his tenderness is given in his tribute to her character! 'During a close observation of several years I never saw her, upon the most trying occasions, in any degree ruffled or discomposed, but she was always loving, always happy. It was her peculiar gift, and her continual care, to seek and save that which was lost; to support the weak, to comfort the feeble-minded, to bring back what had been turned out of the way. And in doing this God endued her above her fellows with the love that "believeth, hopeth, endureth all things."' In Wesley's *Journal* there is a record of the cause of her death. It makes a strong appeal to us. On Sunday, October 9, she went, with Silas Told, to Newgate to visit the condemned malefactors. The prison-work of the London Methodists was carried on by some of the members who belonged to the Society at the Foundery, Silas Told being the leader in this self-denying form of Christian charity. Wesley tells us that Sarah Peters, at the time we have reached, went constantly to Newgate, sometimes alone, sometimes with one or two others. These visitors entered the cells of the prisoners condemned to death, and exhorted and prayed with them. When Sarah Peters went away she was followed with 'abundance of prayers and blessings.' In November there were six men and one woman who were awaiting execution. One of the men was suffering from jail-fever,

[1] *Journal*, iii. 380.

but he was visited with the rest. On October 28, at six o'clock in the morning of the day of execution, Silas Told and Sarah Peters were admitted to the prison, and said farewell to their grateful friends. On Wednesday, November 2, Sarah Peters, worn out with her work, took to her bed, having the symptoms of a malignant fever. Wesley had sometimes told her that 'she carried her charity too far, not allowing herself what was needful'; but her answer was, 'I can live upon one meal a day, so that I may have to give to them that have none.' Wesley's gentle reproof was needed; for when the fever attacked her she had no strength to resist. But she 'praised God in the fires for ten days, continually witnessing the good confession, "I have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith; I am going to receive the crown." And a little after midnight on Sunday, the 13th, her spirit returned to God.'[1]

Before closing our record of 1748, a year crowded with important incidents, it is necessary to record an important fact which concerns the development of the constitution of the Methodist Church, and that confirms our faith in the truth that 'somehow good will be the final goal of ill.' John Bennet, in a letter written from Chinley on October 22, 1748, says:

> On Tuesday, the 18th of this inst., was a meeting (at Todmorden Edge) of the Leaders in the several Societies belonging to Wm. Darney, &c. Four stewards we appointed to inspect into and regulate the temporal affairs of the Societies; every Leader brought his Class Paper and showed what money he had received in the Quarter, which was fairly entered in a book for the purpose. The several Bills of Charges were brought in at the same time, and after they were thoroughly examined were all discharged. But, alas! the people are exceedingly poor, and will not be able to maintain the preachers and William Darney's family. The overplus after the Bills were discharged was only *9s. 2d.* . . .
>
> On Thursday, the 20th of this inst., was our Quarterly Meeting held at Woodley, of the Leaders in Derbyshire, Cheshire, and part of Lancashire. The same method was used here as above. The Lord did bless our meeting in a very extraordinary manner. After business was ended we sang a hymn, several of the brethren prayed, and I gave a short exhortation. Oh! dear Sir, let this method be used in other places. Once a year we propose to meet all the Leaders, and at the other Quarterly Meeting the Stewards in each respective Society need only to be present with the particular accounts. This way will not be very expensive. I have made a small book which shall be kept in the

[1] See John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 381–387. Sarah Peters was a worthy predecessor of Mrs. Elizabeth Fry. Mrs. Fry's visits to Newgate began in 1813.

Box with the Accounts, wherein an exact Account of the Marriages, Deaths, Backsliders, &c., shall be noted down that I may be able to give you an account thereof each Quarter.[1]

The question of the origin of Circuit Quarterly Meetings has excited much interest. In the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for 1843, a series of articles appeared entitled 'Methodism in Former Days.' The third was written by Dr. William W. Stamp. It dealt with the question we are now considering. In this article Dr. Stamp quoted an entry contained in an old book which is now in the archives of the Keighley Circuit. It is a small folio bound in vellum ; and the entry, in the opinion of the Rev. J. Conder Nattrass, is in William Grimshaw's handwriting.[2] This entry must be considered in connexion with the details contained in John Bennet's letter to Wesley from which we have already quoted.

The entry, which is accompanied by an account of cash received and distributed, is as follows :

Oct. 18th, 1748.

At a Meeting then held at Major Marshall's, at Todmorden Edge, in the parish of Rochdale and County of Lancaster, of the Leaders of several Classes in several Religious Societies (to wit) Rosindale, Roughlee, Hepponstal, Todmorden, &c., the following Persons were chosen Stewards of the said societies, and intrusted to transact the temporal affairs :

James Greenwood,
John Parker,
John Madin,
James Dyson.

Memorandum, It was then agreed That if there be any just Cause to Exchange any of the above Stewards, It shall be done at the next Quarterly Meeting held for the said societies by the Approbation of the Leaders then present.

Note. If any Dispute arise touching the choosing of a Steward, or Stewards, the greater Number of Voices shall have the choice to elect a fresh Steward.

This shall be mentioned to our Minister, Mr. John Wesley, or his Successor, who shall end any dispute of this kind.[3]

[1] See *Methodist Recorder*, Winter Number, 1902, 29, 30. Bennet returns the number of members in Darney's Societies, 'as appeared by the books wherein the names were entered,' as 358 ; in the sections represented at the Woodley meeting there were 527 members.

[2] See Mr. Nattrass's 'Notes on Early Methodism in Haworth,' in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, x. 145. A photograph of the famous entry appears in connexion with the article. See also Laycock's *Great Haworth Round*, 67 ; and the Rev. F. F. Bretherton's article on 'Quarterly Meetings' in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vii. 78.

[3] See photograph of the 'entry' in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, x. 141.

It will be seen that this ' entry ' relates to the first Quarterly Meeting mentioned by John Bennet in his letter to Wesley. It is clear that an attempt was to be made to face the financial difficulties that embarrassed the progress of Methodism at this time. It is likely that Bennet's thoughts had been turned to the subject in consequence of the lack of money to assist Societies when attacked by mobs. At this point it is enough to say that his scheme was received by Wesley with admiration ; but he hesitated to allow the method to be used in other places until he had consulted the Conference on the whole question. That consultation took place in 1749 ; we shall see the decision that was reached on this most important suggestion.

XI

CLOUDY AND DARK DAYS

WHILE politicians were considering the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and counting up gains and losses, John Wesley was watching the effect of the war on the moral and religious condition of the nation. He was a loyal Englishman, who followed the course of political and military affairs with attention ; but the improvement of the moral and religious condition of his fellow countrymen was his ruling passion. As he looked at the crowds in London and elsewhere, did he see that the war had sobered them ; that it had created in them a more religious spirit ? Instead of giving his impressions of the effects of the war we will look at the English people at the close of 1748 through the eyes of a man who had no sympathy with Wesley's work, and who has never yet been suspected of Puritanical tendencies. His knowledge of Methodism may be judged from the ridiculous passage in his *History* which John Wesley chastised. Smollett considered Methodism to be a superstition that was spread ' by the endeavours of a few obscure preachers, such as Whitefield and the two Wesleys, who found means to lay the whole Kingdom under contribution.' He must have been reading George White's sermon. What does Smollett say on the supremely important subject of the moral condition of England at this time ?

' Commerce and manufacture flourished again, to such a degree of increase as had never been known in the island ; but this advantage was attended with an irresistible tide of luxury and excess, which flowed through all degrees of the people, breaking down all the mounds of civil polity, and opening a way for licence and immorality. The highways were infested with rapine and assassination ; the cities teemed with the brutal votaries of lewdness, intemperance, and profligacy.' In another place he describes the condition of things in 1750. He says :

By this time all the jails in England were filled with the refuse of the Army and Navy, which having been dismissed at the peace, and either averse to labour or excluded from employment, had naturally preyed upon the commonwealth. Great numbers of those wretches who, by proper regulations, might have been rendered serviceable to the community, were executed as examples; and the rest perished miserably amidst the stench and horrors of noisome dungeons. Even the prison of Newgate was rendered so infectious by the uncommon crowds of confined felons, stewed together in close apartments, that the very air they breathed acquired a pestilential degree of putrefaction. It was this putrefied air, which, adhering to the clothes of the malefactors brought to trial at the bar of the Old Bailey in May, produced among the audience a pestilential fever, which infected and proved fatal to the Lord Mayor of London, one alderman, two of the judges, divers lawyers who attended the session, the greatest part of the jury, and a considerable number of the spectators. In order to prevent such disasters for the future, the jails were cleansed, and accommodated with ventilators, which exhaust the foul and supply a circulation of fresh air; and other humane precautions were taken for the benefit of the prisoners.[1]

No one can read Smollett's descriptions of the condition of England at the close of the war without perceiving the peril that threatened the country. Wesley's knowledge of mobs and jails far exceeded that of the historian; but, in addition, he was exceptionally well acquainted with the religious state of the people of England. In the tumultuous times of the preceding century Sir Edward Sackville in a moment of despondency said, 'The passing-bell ringeth for religion.' In 1748 many were ready to echo his words. In the eighteenth century not a few Christian people listened daily for the doleful knell. The Methodist evangelists refused to despair. The bells they heard were ringing out 'the darkness of the land, ringing in the Christ that is to be.' They ought to have been supported by all the Churches; but, as we know, that support, in most places, was denied them.

At this critical time an assault was made on the principal leaders in the great campaign against irreligion. We have described the opening stage of that assault on the Wesleys and Whitefield, and it is necessary to refer to its development. We may say at once that, in the case of the publication of the 'pretended charge' of the Bishop of Exeter, our sympathies are wholly with Dr. Lavington. But when explanations had been given, and the Wesleys and Whitefield had been cleared

[1] Smollett's *History of England*, xii. 56, 81.

from all blame, the matter, so far as they were concerned, should have ended. The publication of Lavington's retractation was the act of Lady Huntingdon, and the bishop should have settled the affair with her. Instead of closing the controversy, Dr. Lavington resumed it by attacking Wesley and Whitefield in three anonymous pamphlets bearing the title *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd.* The first and second were published in 1749, the third in 1751, and in 1754 the three parts were issued in two volumes.[1]

We do not think it is necessary to dwell at length on the contents of these pamphlets. They created much excitement in the country, and certainly produced, in some quarters, a strong prejudice against the Methodists. Lavington's attack was continued for a considerable time, and its consequences were of great importance so far as the work of John Wesley is concerned. The best modern answer to Lavington's book is contained in Miss Julia Wedgwood's *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century.* Miss Wedgwood is far from being a partisan of John Wesley, and that fact increases the value of her criticism of Dr. Lavington. With two of the Bishop's pamphlets before her, this is what she says:

The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd (1754) is hardly to be classed with the publications which represent the 'Church against the Methodists'; Bishop Lavington, the anonymous author, deserves to be coupled with the men who fling dead cats and rotten eggs at the Methodists, not with those who assailed their tenets with arguments, or even serious rebuke. The vulgar prejudice of a similarity between Methodists and Roman Catholics, which was fading away at this time, was made use of to give a sting to every possible action, habit, or expression which could be proved common to both, the whole being flavoured with that spice of coarse buffoonery which would doubtless secure plenty of readers. It is constructed on a very simple plan: some extract is taken, generally from those extravagant passages in Wesley's or Whitefield's journal which lend themselves to such a purpose, and then follows a parallel quotation from the lives of the saints tending to identify the two instances of enthusiasm, which indeed in many instances was possible without any reflection on either. Take the following specimen: 'Another bait to catch admirers, and very common among enthusiasts, is a restless impatience and insatiable thirst of travelling and undertaking dangerous voyages for the conversion of infidels. Accordingly our itinerant Methodists are fond of expressing their zeal on this account. Mr. Whitefield says, "When

[1] Green's *Anti-Methodist Publications*, p. 57.

letters came from Messrs. Wesley, their accounts fired my soul, and made me even long to go abroad for God too. The thoughts of it crowded continually upon me"; and then comes a parallel passage from Wesley. But all this only shows the natural, unsettled humour, the rapid motion, of enthusiastic heads. And we may assure them that the zealous impatience of Popish fanatics are, by all accounts, greatly superior. "Oh, how many times have the nuns seen their sister of prayer drunk with zeal for the conversion of sinners and infidels, bemoaning herself that she was not a man to go abroad and gain erring souls!" The windmill is in all their heads. 'Tis almost incredible what miseries were endured by St. Francis, in his heroic voyage to convert the Sultan of Egypt, in that of St. Anthony to convert the Moors, and of St. Ignatius to convert the Turks.'

The above quotation will appear to most persons to have the aspect of an attack rather upon Christianity than upon Methodism. The following passage is a specimen (the worst, it is allowed) of the writer's courtesy. Whitefield had mentioned in the most general and abstract language that his youth had not been free from vice; on which his opponent remarks: 'His first account of God's dealings with him is such a boyish, ludicrous, filthy, nasty, and shameless relation of himself, as quite defies paper, and is shocking to decency and modesty.' The conclusion of the book is far more shocking to decency and modesty than any possible confession of Whitefield's. It consists of a long account of the Eleusinian Mysteries as they are explained by ecclesiastical writers, with all that physical symbolism so shocking to our notions of which, justly or unjustly, they are accused by the Fathers; and this painful picture is made relevant to the writer's purpose by being described as 'a strange system of heathen Methodism.' Such was the remedy offered by a Father of the Church to a corrupt age against the terrible danger of enthusiasm.

The only interest in this rambling and scurrilous production is that it is the first attack upon the Methodists in which we find the remarkable convulsions produced by Wesley's preaching noticed with anything of that fullness which we should expect. One explanation suggested by Lavington is that Wesley had drugged the *convulsionnaires*, but he does not shrink from the conclusion (which was totally alien to the dry, commonplace sense of the Church in that day) that 'If there be anything in this mysterious part of Methodism exceeding the powers of nature, I see no reason against concluding that is the work of some evil spirit, a sort of magical operation or diabolical illusion.' This distinct acceptance of the Methodist disorder as possibly supernatural at once separates Dr. Lavington from his brother bishops, as taking up an attitude which they could not have adopted without stultifying themselves. It is a curious test of the evidential value of miracles that while on the one hand Wesley was assailed for not working them, on the other he should be reproached with encouraging magical operations and diabolical illusions.[1]

[1] Miss Julia Wedgwood's *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century*, 313–315.

A visit to Exeter Cathedral enriches the picture gallery of the mind. We have watched the great towers as they have stood against the blue of a cloudless sky; we have seen them in 'the pale moonlight'; we have lingered before the decorated front crowded with the figures of Kings and Knights; we have entered the cathedral and worshipped there at evensong. Memory holds fast the treasure of these recollections; but it also reminds us of two mysteries. Those who visit the Close in the evening, when the hurry of day is over, will pause in the presence of that white marble figure which represents a man who still lives in the regard of students of ecclesiastical polity. Looking at the figure in the deepening twilight we confess that our thoughts are not busy with 'ecclesiastical polity,' but with another question. We are in the presence of Richard Hooker, universally known as 'the judicious.' As we look at him, sitting in an attitude suggesting profound meditation, we ask ourselves a question which baffles us: 'Why do some men who possess unquestionable wisdom, whose "judiciousness" becomes a proverb—why do they so often make mistakes in their matrimonial arrangements?' Let it not be supposed that we have raised this question recklessly. We shall see that it is intimately connected with facts we shall soon have to face.

We will wait for the morning light before we confront the second mystery. We enter the cathedral, and read the inscriptions on the tombs and monuments. One of them arrests our special attention. It describes a man who possessed conspicuous and enviable virtues. His epitaph declares that 'he never ceased to improve his talents, nor to employ them to the noblest purposes.' It concludes with these words: 'Unaffected sanctity dignified his instructions, and indulgent candour sweetened his government. At length, having eminently discharged his duties, Of a man, a Christian, and a Prelate, prepared by habitual meditation To resign life without regret, To meet death without terror, He expired with the praises of God upon his lips, In his 79th year, September 13, 1762.' The date arrests our attention. We look up and find that we have been reading the inscription on the monument erected to the memory of Bishop Lavington.[1] In trying to solve the mystery of this eulogium

[1] See Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, ii. 153.

we take refuge in the theory of the efficacy of a 'late repentance.'

Lavington became the Bishop of Exeter in 1747, and soon commenced his campaign against the Methodists. His wide diocese included Cornwall. Notwithstanding the rough experiences which had tested the fidelity of the Societies in that county, the members stood fast, and their numbers constantly increased. Cornwall was Lavington's difficulty. After visiting that part of his diocese, he came to the conclusion that he would strike a blow at the clergy who were encouraging the Methodists.

We note that in 1748 all the pulpits of the churches in the north-west corner of Cornwall, with one exception, were closed against the Wesleys. That was a considerable victory for Dr. Lavington. But the key of the position was not taken. George Thomson held out without a thought of surrender. The bishop determined to terrify him. He summoned him to meet him. It was an interesting interview. When Thomson appeared the bishop charged him with 'Methodistical practices,' and with 'daring to countenance Whitefield.' But Lavington did not know the man to whom he was speaking. The conversation between them grew exciting. Then the bishop blundered. He threatened 'to strip off the gown' from Thomson, but was saved the trouble. Thomson took off his gown, threw it down at the bishop's feet, and said, 'I can preach the gospel without a gown.' Saying this, he left the room and ended the interview. Lavington was lost in amazement. He went through the experience of the hectoring man who meets an antagonist firm of purpose. His courage failed. He was unaccustomed to such a spirit of independence. When he had recovered from his surprise he sent a message to Thomson, who went once more to meet him. Instead of continuing his threats, Lavington tried the soothing method. But neither soothings nor threats shook Thomson's determination to befriend the Methodists, and to preach the doctrines that had led him into his experience of salvation by faith.[1]

If Lavington could have induced Thomson and Bennett to close their pulpits against the Wesleys he would have greatly encouraged their enemies. But would his victory

[1] *Life and Times of Lady Huntingdon*, i. 126.

have been complete? The Methodist preachers would have carried on their work. Further, we wonder if he suspected that in Truro a voice would soon be heard proclaiming the doctrines of Methodism from the pulpit of the great church in that town. A clergyman was there who was gradually approaching the light in which Thomson and Bennett walked. We have waited for him; and now he comes into view. He was appointed as curate of Truro in 1746. Bewailing the ineffectiveness of his preaching, through many weary months he sought the secret of power. In 1748 he found it in his own experience of conversion. In that year he became a most successful evangelical preacher, and was soon brought into fellowship with the men who were toiling to effect the religious reformation of the people of Cornwall. We hail the coming of Samuel Walker of Truro.

Lavington's pamphlets, which were issued at intervals, may have strengthened the prejudice of some persons whose knowledge of Methodism was superficial, and his campaign in Cornwall may have given a little more courage to persecutors who were beginning to suspect that they were fighting a losing battle; but it is safe to say that Methodism in the western country received little permanent injury from the bishop's attacks. We may now dismiss him, for a time, from our thoughts, and turn our attention to events which did endanger the work of the Wesleys in England.

On February 21, 1749, John Wesley arrived at Kingswood, and made the school his centre until the end of March. He was very busy there. He carried out his design to have as many of the preachers at the school as could possibly be spared during Lent, and 'to read lectures to them every day, as he did to his pupils in Oxford.' Seventeen assembled. He divided them into two classes, and read to one Bishop Pearson *On the Creed*, to the other Aldrich's *Logic*, and to both *Rules for Action and Utterance*. He was now in his element.[1] Charles Wesley paid him a brief visit. He says, 'I spent half an hour with my brother at Kingswood, which is now very much like a college. Twenty-one boarders are there, and a dozen students, his sons and pupils in the gospel.

[1] When John Wesley was a tutor at Lincoln College, Oxford, he was not only Greek Lecturer, but also Lecturer in Logic and in Philosophy. See Mr. Brigden's article in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, xiv. 154.

I believe he is now laying the foundations of many generations.'[1] He also set apart an hour weekly for the purpose of meeting the children of the four schools which then existed at Kingswood. He mentions the schools. One was for boys who boarded in 'the new House'; a second was for girls who were boarders in the old 'Room'; a third was a school for day-scholars, boys taught by James Harding; and the fourth was a school for girls taught by Sarah Dimmock. This enumeration reminds us of the fact that Wesley designed to have a boarding-school for girls at Kingswood, and succeeded in establishing it. In his *Journal* there is a photograph of the 'Rules for the girls' school at Kingswood.'[2] They remind us of the 'Rules' of the boys' school; we note that the charge for board and teaching of a child was ten pounds a year. The children's meetings conducted at Kingswood by Wesley in 1749, gave him much satisfaction. He found that some of the children were deeply and lastingly affected. In addition to teaching and preaching, Wesley was busy with his pen. He was preparing material for his new venture, the *Christian Library*, the first volume of which was printed by Felix Farley at Bristol in this year.

On Friday, March 31, John Wesley was abridging Cave's *Primitive Christianity*. His brother arrived at the school. In his *Journal* Charles Wesley records an interesting fact. He found there 'our beloved sisters Murray and Davey.'[3] John Wesley does not mention Grace Murray at this point in his *Journal*. Her little son was at the school, but that does not altogether explain her presence. Suddenly we remember that John Wesley had promised to take her to Ireland in the spring, and that he was thither bound in a few days. Considering all that had happened, he might have thought himself released from his promise, but we know that he occupied a conspicuous place among those who swear to their own hurt and do not change.

On Saturday, April 8, there was a sound of wedding-bells in Garth. On that day Charles Wesley and Sarah Gwynne were married. Not a cloud was seen from morning till night. Mr. Gwynne gave away the bride, and John Wesley joined the hands of the happy pair. It was a genuine love-match;

[1] See John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 391 *note*. [2] iii. 357.
[3] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 54.

and the brightness of the day seemed a prophecy of coming years of gladness. The wedding-party returned to the house, and the delighted bridegroom says: 'We were cheerful without mirth, serious without sadness. My brother seemed the happiest person among us.'[1]

On Sunday morning, April 16, about three o'clock, John Wesley, with his travelling companions William Tucker, one of his preachers, and Grace Murray, landed in Ireland after a stormy voyage from Holyhead. Their landing-place was then known as Dunleary, now as Kingstown. After making arrangements for his companions to follow in a chaise, Wesley walked to Dublin, and reached Skinner's Alley a little before the time of service. He preached there; and in the afternoon, and again in the evening, he preached in the garden connected with the room near Dolphin's Barn.[2]

John Wesley's third visit to Ireland occurred at a critical time. The Societies had been subjected to fierce persecution, especially at Cork, where the threat of coming storms, which Charles Wesley had anticipated, had been fulfilled. John Wesley stayed in Ireland until July 20, when he embarked in a small sloop, with Grace Murray and others, and sailed for Bristol. In his *Journal* and in Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland* the ordinary incidents of this visit are fully stated.[3]

In addition to his constant preaching and visitation of the Societies Wesley was busy with his pen. It was in 1749 that two pamphlets appeared which have a special interest and value. They were both printed in Dublin by S. Powell, in Crane Lane. Mr. Green, in his *Wesley Bibliography*, reminds us that, up to 1749, all that had been recorded of the several Conferences previously held was preserved and circulated in manuscript. We have taken full advantage of the contents of the Bennet *Minutes*, which have been republished by the Wesley Historical Society, and we have seen how necessary it was that not only the lay preachers, but also the members of the Societies, should be acquainted with the resolutions that were passed by the Conference for their government. In the *Minutes* printed in Dublin, we

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 55, 56.

[2] See *ante*, 53.

[3] See John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 395–414; Crookshank's *History of Methodism*, i. 49–58.

see the first step that was taken to spread information of great value among the Societies. At the first Conference, held in London in 1744, the question was asked, 'How far should any of us mention to others what may be mentioned here?' It was then agreed, 'That not one word which may be here spoken of persons should be mentioned elsewhere. Nothing at all, unless so far as we may be convinced the glory of God requires it. And from time to time we will consider on each head, Is it for the glory of God that what we have now spoken should be mentioned again?'[1] John Wesley was of opinion that the time had come to publish some of the proceedings of the Conferences that had been held, for the guidance of the preachers and the Societies, so that unity of procedure might be maintained in the two countries. So the pamphlets, which were afterwards called *The Doctrinal Minutes* and *The Disciplinary Minutes*, were published. The first had a large circulation, not only in Ireland, but in England. The second had a limited sale. It was suffered to become so scarce, that, when it was reprinted in 1862, only three of the old copies were known to be in existence.[2]

We must now, with reluctance, turn towards a subject we have already treated in its preliminary stage. John Wesley and Grace Murray were together in Ireland for three months. She was then 'engaged,' as we have seen, to John Bennet; but Wesley says she neither wrote to him nor heard from him. He came to the conclusion that 'the affair between them was as if it had never been.' It is possible to account for Bennet's silence. It is said that some of his relations objected to his marriage with Grace Murray, and that his letters to her got into wrong hands and were stopped. But it is difficult to believe that a shrewd man like Bennet would allow three months to go by without suspecting the mischief, especially when he received no answer to his letters. Wesley watched Grace Murray working among the Irish Societies with great admiration, and the old love revived. Instead of resisting the impulse, and waiting to see Bennet on his return to England, when satisfactory explanations might have been given, he declared himself to Grace Murray, and found

[1] *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 205.
[2] See Green's *Bibliography*, Nos. 135, 136.

that her old love for him had come back in still greater strength. They then made a solemn verbal 'contract' to marry each other. On the first occasion, as we have said, the engagement was informal. Now it acquired special force.

After a rough passage from Ireland Wesley and Grace Murray landed at the quay in Bristol. At Bristol or at Kingswood Grace Murray listened to 'idle tales' about Wesley and some other woman. She believed them; and, 'in a sudden vehement fit of jealousy,' she wrote an affectionate letter to John Bennet. She said nothing to Wesley about the re-opening of the correspondence with Bennet until the letter had been dispatched. When Bennet received her letter he replied to it at once, and said he would meet her when she came into the North. Leaving Bristol with John Wesley, she reached London. Conversing with an intimate acquaintance, she revealed the fact of Wesley's love for her. Her friend gave her this advice: 'Sister Murray, never think of it. I know you thoroughly. It will never do. The people here would never suffer you. And your spirit would not bear their behaviour. You have not humility enough, or meekness, or patience; you would be miserable all your life. And that would make him miserable too. So that, instead of strengthening, you would weaken his hands. If you love yourself, or if you love him, never think of it more.'

Setting out for the North, John Wesley and Grace Murray arrived at Epworth. In that town an interview took place between Wesley and Bennet. Wesley was surprised to find that letters he had written to Grace Murray had been forwarded by her to Bennet. The conversation between the two men opened Wesley's eyes, and he saw he had made a mistake. He judged it right that Bennet should marry Grace Murray without delay. The next morning he wrote to her telling her he thought it was not proper that they should converse any more together. After reading the letter she ran to Wesley 'in an agony of tears.' He was easily moved by the tears of a woman; but John Bennet came into the room and claimed her as his right. Once more Wesley determined to give her up to him. The wise determination to converse no more with Grace Murray could not bear the strain of the news of her serious illness. Wesley paid her a sick-visit. She then told him once more of her love for him,

saying, 'How can you possibly think I love any other better than you?' But, in the evening, John Bennet called on her, with a friend, and argued with her until, at last, she said, 'I *will* marry John Bennet.' On September 6 Wesley, who was much perplexed in his mind by her assurance that she loved him 'a thousand times better than ever she loved John Bennet in her life,' asked her, on their way to Newcastle, 'Which will you choose?' Again and again she said, 'I am determined by conscience, as well as inclination, to live and die with you.' On arriving at the Orphan House, Wesley wrote a strong letter to Bennet in which he set forth the whole of the case. He especially dwelt on the fact of 'the engagement' between Bennet and Grace Murray in Derbyshire, at the time when there was an 'understanding' between Wesley and herself concerning marriage. It appears from this letter that, in the Derbyshire interview, Bennet asked Grace Murray whether she was 'engaged' to Wesley, and she replied that she was not. Wesley, in his letter to Bennet, dated September 7, 1749, says 'There was not so explicit an engagement as would stand good in law; but such an one there was, as ought in conscience to have prevented any other, till it should be dissolved.' Among the many mischances of this unfortunate business, we must number the fact that Wesley's letter, sent to Bennet by the hand of William Shent, was never delivered to him. But Wesley forwarded a copy of it to Charles Wesley, who was in Bristol.[1]

It is necessary to state that, on Thursday, September 2 when at Hindley Hill, near Allendale, in Northumberland, Grace Murray asked that the 'contract' she had made with Wesley in Dublin might be renewed. Christopher Hopper, one of the best known of Wesley's lay preachers, lived at Hindley Hill, and was in the room when the solemn vows were spoken. He noticed that Grace Murray paused and trembled. He asked her if she had any scruple on her mind. Wesley also said, 'If you have the least scruple, I beg you would stop. Pray, do!' She cheerfully replied, 'I have none at all.' Then she spoke the words of the 'contract' immediately. In describing the 'contract,' when it was made in Dublin, Wesley calls it 'a contract *de praesenti*.' In a

[1] The letter appears in the British Museum MS., and in Dr. Leger's *Wesley's Last Love*.

note in Dr. Leger's book such a contract is described as follows: 'Any contract made *per verba de praesenti* was, before the time of George II, so far a valid marriage that the parties might be *compelled*, in the spiritual Courts, to celebrate it in *facie Ecclesiae*.'[1] Both Wesley and Grace Murray understood the contract in the sense in which it was commonly regarded about that time in England. An hour after making the contract Wesley took horse for Whitehaven, leaving Grace Murray to carry on her work among the women-bands in Allendale. She stood looking after him as he rode up the hill. He says that he had not one uneasy thought; he believed God would give them to meet again 'at the time when He saw good.' They met once more on Friday, October 6, and then Grace Murray was the wife of John Bennet.

In order that we may shed a light on the startling fact we have mentioned we must leave the North and make our way to the West of England. Shortly after Charles Wesley's marriage Mr. Gwynne left Garth; and, crossing the borderline, found a new home in Shropshire. He settled in Ludlow, that town which stands on a high hill crowned with a great church and a ruined castle—a castle which makes us dream of Milton and *Comus*. Charles Wesley and his young bride made their way to Bristol. They found a temporary lodging in Stokes Croft, but, on September 1 they removed into a newly-built house in Charles Street in the same neighbourhood. The beautiful days went by; then John Wesley's letter, enclosing a copy of the letter written to John Bennet, came to hand. All the brightness faded. Charles Wesley was an impetuous man; his feelings changed swiftly; his actions kept pace with them. When he thought that his brother was about to be married to Grace Murray he determined that he would hasten to the North and prevent what seemed to him a catastrophe. We turn to his *Journal*, hoping to find out his real objection to the marriage. But from September 15 to October 22 there is a tantalizing gap in the records. We cannot accept the usual explanation that his only objection to the marriage was the social position of Grace Murray. It finds some support in a letter he wrote to John Wesley, so cannot be dismissed at once from consideration. But, in addition, after reading his brother's letter he thought that

[1] R. M. Kerr's *Student's Blackstone*, 103.

John Bennet had been badly treated. And, further, we think that the danger to the peace of the Societies, which had been suggested in the conversation between Grace Murray and her clear-eyed 'familiar friend' when they met in London, was present in his mind when he left his house and posted to the North. Our suspicions are confirmed by an extract from a letter to Grace Murray which has been rescued from oblivion by the editor of John Wesley's Standard *Journal*. In that letter Charles Wesley says: 'The case thus appears to me. You promised J. B. to marry him—since which you engaged yourself to another. . . . And who is that other? One of such importance that his doing so dishonest an action would destroy both himself, and me, and the whole work of God.'[1]

It is only necessary to mention a few more facts connected with this 'Tragedy of Errors.' Charles Wesley met George Whitefield in the North and told him the story. Whitefield, in a subsequent interview with John Wesley, showed that he was not carried away by Charles Wesley's statement. John Wesley says Whitefield told him 'it was his judgement that she was my wife and that he had said so to John Bennet; that he would fain have persuaded them to wait, and not to marry till they had seen me; but that my brother's impetuosity prevailed and bore down all before it.' Charles Wesley acted with his usual swiftness. He went to Whitehaven, saw his brother, and reasoned with him in vain. Then he went to Hindley, where Grace Murray was staying, and carried her away behind him to Ferry Hill. Arrangements were made with John Bennet for her marriage. All this time John Wesley was going on with his work! On a most critical day, when he might have had an interview with Grace Murray, he hesitated, but at last he decided that as he had promised to be in Whitehaven he must keep his word. So he rode away to his appointment. On Tuesday, October 3, when he was returning from Whitehaven in heavy storms of rain, John Bennet and Grace Murray were married in St. Andrew's Church, Newcastle, in the presence of Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. Mr. Curnock, the editor of John Wesley's *Journal*, adds a note with which we may close this subject. He says: 'Too late Charles Wesley discovered that he had

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 439 *note*.

persuaded John Bennet to marry his brother's betrothed fiancée, and had led Grace to believe that "the important person" who had steadfastly loved her for ten years had actually expressed the wish that, for the sake of the work of God, she would marry another. . . . The marriage of Grace Murray, either with Bennet or Wesley, was, *per se*, a matter of small moment compared with a breach between John and Charles Wesley, which must at that critical period have either rent the Methodist Society in twain, or, more probably, scattered it to the winds. The disaster was averted by the tact and tenderness of George Whitefield and John Nelson, and by John Wesley's extraordinary self-control and charity.'[1]

[1] Full information on the subject of John Wesley and Grace Murray may be obtained from the editor's notes in Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 417–422, 429, 431, 439; Henry Moore's *Life of Wesley*, ii., 163–171; Tyerman's *Life and Times of John Wesley*, ii. 42–57; Winter Number of *The Methodist Recorder*, 1902; and Dr. Leger's *John Wesley's Last Love*.

XII

A NOVEMBER CONFERENCE

On Thursday, November 16, 1749, John Wesley held a Conference in London. He does not mention the fact in his *Journal,* but we have sufficient evidence to prove it. The minutes of this Conference are in existence. They are contained in a manuscript book which has passed through several hands. It was, until a few years ago, in the possession of Mr. George Stampe, of Grimsby. In 1862, when a revised edition of the first volume of the printed *Minutes of Conference* was issued, the proceedings of the 1749 Conference were published in its Appendix. A mistake occurred in the 'introductory note.' The MS. is not in the handwriting of 'the late Rev. John Jones.' The error was corrected in 1896, in the first *Publication* of the Wesley Historical Society. Exceptionally competent judges declared that the MS. minutes of the 1749 Conference 'is wholly in Wesley's own handwriting.'[1] In describing its transactions we will follow the report contained in the Appendix to the 1862 edition of the printed *Minutes of Conference.* It will be seen that the proceedings were of special importance. We have no information concerning the building in which it was held, nor is there a list of those who were present. We know that Charles Wesley was in London on November 16; but in his *Journal* he says nothing about the Conference. All that we know is that the next day, after 'examining the classes,' he returned to Bristol 'in great bodily pain.' It is also clear, from a record in the minutes, that John Bennet was absent. We will refer to that record at a later stage. We regret the lack of these particulars of attendance; but our main business at present is with the proceedings of the Conference.

It is not surprising that the first question concerned the union of the Societies throughout England. The subject

[1] See *W.H.S. Publications,* i. 5.

had occupied the mind of John Wesley during the year, and had attained greater impressiveness by reason of recent occurrences. It was essential that the phrase 'The United Societies' should receive additional force and reality. The year 1749 was one of prosperity in almost all parts of the country; but there were ominous signs of failure, division, and disturbance in a few places. The number of members in Bristol had decreased. We have no doubt that the building of the 'New Room' had interfered with the meetings of the Society, and had something to do with the numerical decline. But, apart from the Western town, we cannot ignore the fact that John Wesley's projected marriage had caused disturbance in the London Society; and probably among the Methodists of Newcastle. We must bear the circumstances of the times in mind as we listen to the 'conversation' on that November day in the far-off years.

Let us turn to the minutes and examine the entry concerning the first part of the business of the Conference.

It was inquired,

Q. 1. Can there be any such thing as a general union of our Societies throughout England?

A. A proposal for this was made above a year ago. The substance of it is this: Might not all the Societies throughout England be considered as one body, firmly united together by one spirit of love and heavenly-mindedness? Might not that in London be accounted the mother-church? and the Stewards of this consult for the good of all the churches?

Might they not answer letters from all parts, and give advice at least in temporal things? But it may be asked, 'How can the temporal state of all the Societies be known to the Stewards in London?' I answer, Very easily, by means of the Assistants. Let each Assistant make diligent inquiry at every Quarterly Meeting concerning the temporal as well as spiritual state of each Society. Let him inquire particularly of each, 1. Are you in debt? 2. How much, and to whom? 3. Are all in your Society poor? 4. Are not some therein both able and willing to contribute toward the public debt? 5. Or to the furtherance of the Gospel, yearly? 6. Or toward a common stock? 7. Who keeps your account? How? And the answers he receives, let him transmit quarterly to London. He might also put them into a regular method of keeping their accounts, and transacting all their regular affairs. After the Stewards in London are thus informed, may they not settle a regular correspondence with all the Societies? By this means we might not only be able to discharge all debts, but in a little time have a small Fund, out of which a Society 'under persecution,' or in real distress, upon application made to the stewards in London,

might speedily be relieved. Being thus united together in one body, of which Christ Jesus is the Head, neither the world nor the devil will be able to separate us in time or in eternity.

Q. 2. How may we make some advances towards this?

A. By appointing one of our Helpers in each Circuit to take charge of the Societies therein.

Q. 3. By what means may such a Helper be distinguished from the rest?

A. He may be termed an Assistant.

Q. 4. How should an Assistant be qualified for the charge?

A. Not so much by superior gifts, as by walking closely with God.[1]

These suggestions show that John Wesley had been studying the subject of Quarterly Meetings which John Bennet had brought before him. But they also reveal a wider scope. No one who has studied the present constitution of Methodism will fail to recognize the importance of these suggestions. As we watch them the outlines of present arrangements gradually emerge, and the Methodism of the future stands out with almost startling clearness. Enough of this plan remains to cause us to admire the far-sightedness of the men of that distant day.

Glancing over these resolutions, we are arrested, first of all, by the suggestion, 'Might not the Society in London be accounted the mother-church?' That question causes the ghosts of old controversies to arise. It is usual in the present day to hear some persons affirm that 'the mother-church of Methodism is the Church of England.' It is well to be wary in assenting to that theory. We recall Wesley's statement in the third section of his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion.* Speaking of the Methodists in 1745 he says: 'A great part of these went to no church at all before they heard us preach. They no more pretended to belong to the Church of England than to the Church of Muscovy. If, therefore, they went to no church now, they would be no farther from the Church than they were before.'[2] In addition, we know that considerable numbers of Dissenters joined the Methodist Societies in Wesley's day. He strongly advised them to attend the services in their own chapels on Sundays. When Methodist 'preaching-houses' were built, and regular services began to be held in them, many of these Dissenters not only 'met in class,' but habitually worshipped with the Methodist

[1] *Minutes of Conference*, i. 708. [2] Works, viii. 236 (8vo ed.)

congregation. In numerous instances they retained their dissenting convictions, but they were known to their neighbours as members of Wesley's Societies. We do not overlook the important fact that a large proportion of the Methodist members were Church of England people. They held their old convictions concerning Church government, and some of them strongly resisted any movement which threatened to carry them away from the Establishment. It was to them their 'mother-church.' We are sure, however, that a great number of Methodists, who were comprised in the first and second sections we have mentioned, would have been surprised if they had been informed that their 'mother-church' was the Church of England.

As the years have passed, the question of the relation of the early Methodist Societies to the Church of England has frequently emerged, and has been freely discussed. We take this opportunity of indicating a standpoint which should be occupied by all who wish to reach a sound conclusion on this controverted matter. In 1881 Dr. Rigg, in consultation with the Rev. Richard Green and the present writer, prepared two pamphlets which were called for by the incessant attacks of certain extreme High Churchmen. One of the pamphlets was entitled, *Was John Wesley a High Churchman?* The other, *Is Modern Methodism Wesleyan Methodism?* At this point we are only concerned with the latter. In it the following carefully considered statement appears concerning the relations of the early Methodist Societies to the Church of England. It is not necessary to emphasize the fact that Dr. Rigg had a wide and accurate knowledge of the history of Methodism in the time of Wesley. This is what he says in the pamphlet:

> Many Methodists were themselves personally members of the Church of England—though a continually increasing number were not; but the Society, as such, was in no sense or degree any part or any dependency of that Church. It had no organic connexion with it whatever. The parish clergy, as a rule, had no authority in the Society; they stood in no relation with it. Some three or four parish clergymen, during fifty years, connected themselves with Mr. Wesley as his helpers, and put themselves under his orders. These were thus brought into connexion with his Societies. But otherwise, and as parish ministers, the clergy had no relation whatever to John Wesley's Societies. Nor had the bishops, nor any bishops, any authority over the Society, or in the Conference, or, so far as regarded his Methodist

work, and his relation to his Societies, over John Wesley. Methodism, therefore, as an organization, was altogether outside the Church of England during Wesley's own lifetime.[1]

Having quoted Dr. Rigg's opinion, it is necessary to produce a judgement on the question of the relation of Methodism to the Church of England in the eighteenth century. In 1906 a volume of the valuable *History of the English Church* appeared. It dealt with that history from the accession of George I to the end of the eighteenth century. When Canon Overton died, he left a rough draft of a book which covered that period. It became the basis of the seventh volume of the *History* we have just mentioned. The reviser was the Rev. Frederic Relton. He not only revised Canon Overton's work, but increased the value of the book by his own contributions. He says, however, that he 'had not willingly parted with a line, scarcely a word' of what Canon Overton had written. The book is a composite production, and therefore it is difficult to assign the opinions expressed in it to the original writer. Without undertaking the task of 'a Higher Critic,' it will be enough to say that the opinions expressed concerning the relation of Methodism to the Church of England are in harmony with Canon Overton's well-considered judgements.

In the Introduction to the book it is said:

> The reader will find little in these pages about the marvellous organization which Wesley either originated or adopted, not because it is a thing of naught, but simply because it is not a part of the particular subject of this book. For the same reason Whitefield's efforts, under the patronage of Lady Huntingdon, are lightly passed over, because they had even less connexion with the Church of England than the Wesleyan Societies; Whitefield being far less of a Churchman than either of the brother Wesleys.

In another place it is said:

> The Society of which John Wesley was the founder hardly comes within our scope. It is impossible not to come to the conclusion that from the very first the Wesleyan movement, so far as it concerned organization, never was, and never could have been, a Church movement. It is true that Wesley's commanding influence not only prevented any formal separation from the Church during his lifetime, but

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

also secured the punctual attendance, at least for some time, at the public worship in the parish churches ' of all who regarded his opinion ' ; that is, in other words, of all Methodists, for with them his word was law. But all this seems beside the mark. The real question is, What was the tendency of the movement from the very beginning ? Where did the followers of Wesley find their religion ? Surely not in the Church system, but in their own separate organizations. It is a purely modern notion that the Wesleyan movement ever was—or ever was intended to be, except by Wesley—a Church movement.[1]

In these quotations from Canon Overton's and Mr. Relton's book there is little we should be inclined to challenge. The fact that John Wesley strongly urged the Dissenters in his Societies to attend their own chapels is overlooked; but, on the whole, the conclusions are sound. They are in harmony with those reached by Dr. Rigg. It is time that ' the purely modern notion ' which still lingers in some minds should be dismissed. Wesley's suggestion that the London Society should be accounted ' the mother-church ' of Methodism has strong claims to adoption.

Returning to our examination of the recommendations of the Conference of 1749, which were intended to promote a general union of the Methodist Societies throughout England, we see at once that the tentative proposal to make the stewards of the London Societies the agents in securing that union would have to be laid aside. The Methodists at all times have shown their possession of a due allowance of ' human nature,' and we can understand that slumbering jealousies might have been aroused in Bristol, Newcastle, and elsewhere. But we must not overlook words which seem to limit the province of the London stewards. The Conference thought that, ' at least in temporal affairs,' the other Societies might consult them. At this time the question of the support of the preachers and their wives was emerging. The cost of prosecuting persecutors had emerged, and demanded immediate attention. Wesley thought that his scheme would lead to arrangements which would not only enable the Societies to discharge their debts, but, in a little time, would secure the formation of ' a small fund, out of which a Society under persecution, or in real distress, upon application to the stewards in London, might speedily be relieved.' That is more than a glimmer of light on the origin of ' the connexional system,'

[1] *History of the English Church*, vii. 6, 74–75.

with its numerous funds, by which the unity of Methodism has been secured.

Whatever may have been the defects of the scheme that was presented to the Conference of 1749, it shows that John Wesley understood the power of the layman in the management of his Societies. We have already emphasized that fact, but it needs to be remembered at every stage of our inquiry. It must not be forgotten that nearly all his preachers were laymen; so were his stewards and trustees. As for his class-leaders, if we examine the lists contained in Stevenson's *City Road Chapel and its Associations* we discover the fact that in 1742, at the Foundery, the men leaders were far outnumbered by the women leaders; of the former there were nineteen, of the latter forty-seven. That is shown by the list Wesley himself prepared.[1]

Wesley availed himself of all the trustworthy helpers he could find to assist him in his work, making them responsible to him for the manner in which their share of the work was done. It was fortunate that he never abandoned his position as the final authority on all matters connected with the management of his Societies. A church, founded on the Connexional principle, that does not possess a final authority is on its way to disunion. That authority at an early stage may be a man; later it may be a selected assembly; but a Connexional church is always in peril if it does not possess a person or an assembly of persons to speak the decisive word. Let no one envy the position of the final authority. As we watch Wesley struggling with his own work, and spending hours in composing vexatious quarrels and dangerous misunderstandings, our pity is excited. It is no wonder he sought some relief, and that he tried to devise a plan that would lighten the burden of his position. The prosperity of Methodism continually increased the weight of that burden, and it was imperative that some arrangement should be made to assist him in the government of the Societies.

In the *Minutes* of the Conference of 1749 we have a view of the territorial position of Methodism in that year. We shall have to wait for some time before we get another opportunity of seeing so clear a statement. We will therefore

[1] See Stevenson's *City Road Chapel*, 29.

give the answer of the Conference to the question, ' How many Circuits are there now ? '

A. Nine. 1. LONDON : including (1) London itself, (2) Kent and Surrey, (3) Essex, (4) Brentford, (5) Windsor, (6) Wycombe, (7) Oxford, (8) Reading, (9) Shaburn, (10) Blewberry.

2. BRISTOL : including (1) Bristol itself, (2) Kingswood, (3) Bath, (4) Bearfield, (5) Seend, (6) The Devizes, (7) Salisbury, (8) Road, (9) Coleford, (10) Oakhill, (11) Shepton, (12) Dorsetshire, (13) Middlesey, (14) Beercrocomb, (15) Taunton, (16) Collumpton.

3. CORNWALL : including (1) Cornwall itself, (2) Plymouth Dock, (3) Tavistock.

4. IRELAND.

5. WALES.

6. STAFFORDSHIRE : including (1) Stroud, (2) Cirencester, (3) Stanley, (4) Evesham, (5) Wednesbury, (6) Leominster, (7) Shrewsbury, (8) Nottingham.

7. CHESHIRE : including (1) Cheshire itself, (2) Derbyshire, (3) Lancashire, (4) Sheffield.

8. YORKSHIRE AND LINCOLNSHIRE.

9. NEWCASTLE : including (1) Newcastle itself, (2) the county of Durham, (3) Cumberland, (4) Northumberland, (5) Berwick.

If we compare this list with that which appears in the *Minutes* of 1746 we shall be impressed by the remarkable progress that had been made in so short a time.[1] This prosperity made it impossible for John Wesley to give careful and constant attention to the Societies in each circuit. Once more urgent necessity suggested the importance of a division of labour. Without jeopardizing his position as the final authority he saw it was possible to devolve much of his work on men who should be selected by the Conference to take special charge of the Societies which were grouped together in the widely-extended circuits. We have seen that a distinction had already arisen between ' Helpers ' and ' Assistants ' ; but, up to the Conference of 1749, that distinction is rather difficult to follow. The *Minutes* give a definition of the position and duties of an ' Assistant ' which ends our uncertainty.

The Conference, after discussing the question of ' a general union ' of the Societies throughout England, and coming to the conclusions we have recorded to make some advances towards that union, made a step in the right direction by

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 324.

appointing one of the 'helpers' in each circuit to take charge of the Societies therein. In order to distinguish this 'helper' from the rest of the preachers it was resolved to call him an 'assistant'; and he was to be qualified for the charge, 'not so much by superior gifts as by walking closely with God.' It was arranged that John or Charles Wesley should act in London, John Jones in Bristol and Cornwall, John Haughton and Jonathan Reeves in Ireland, William Thomas in Wales, James Jones in Staffordshire, John Bennet in Cheshire, William Shent in Yorkshire, and John Downes in the Newcastle circuit. The question, What is the office of an assistant? was asked and answered: '1. To visit the classes in each place, and write new lists of all the members of the Societies. 2. To regulate the Bands. 3. To deliver new tickets. 4. To keep watch-nights. 5. To take in or put out of the Society. 6. To hold Quarterly Meetings, and therein diligently to inquire into the spiritual and temporal estate of each Society. 7. To watch over the Helpers in each Circuit, and see that they behave well, and want nothing. 8. To take care that every Society be supplied with books, and that the money for them be returned quarterly.' In addition to these duties the 'assistants' were directed to take an exact list of each Society every Easter, and to transmit their lists to London some time before Whitsuntide.

This new departure was of great importance. It relieved the almost intolerable strain that was affecting John Wesley's health. We have noted signs of his weariness and physical weakness, and we know that, notwithstanding this relief, his life, four years afterwards, was in peril by reason of his faithfulness to the call of duty. The value of this division of labour has been proved by the experience of numerous years, and the arrangement of 1749 has persisted to the present day. The modern superintendent of a circuit may rightly claim that the origin of his office may be traced back to a Conference held in London more than one hundred and seventy years ago.

It will be seen that one of the duties of an 'assistant' was to hold Quarterly Meetings. But it is certain some of the best informed among them were unacquainted with the character of the meetings which had been introduced that year in Yorkshire and Cheshire. The Conference recognized this

fact, and, in order to help them, it was resolved to desire John Bennet, ' 1. To send us up his Plan. 2. To go himself as soon as may be to Newcastle and Wednesbury, and teach them the nature and method of these meetings.' The first official allusions made to Quarterly Meetings, as constituting a branch of the system of Methodism, are to be found in the *Minutes* of the Conference of 1749. It is clear that the character and business of these meetings had been considered by Wesley and some of the officers of his Societies since the first Quarterly Meeting was held at Todmorden Edge. But further information was needed; so the arrangement for consulting John Bennet was approved by the Conference. We will not attempt to settle the disputed question, ' From whom did John Bennet get his idea of Quarterly Meetings? ' It is certain that meetings called by that name existed among the Quakers and in Ingham's Societies; but those constituted by Bennet can easily be distinguished from them. In addition it is certain that Bennet's Societies are the forerunners of the Methodist Quarterly Meetings of the present day. In Dr. W. W. Stamp's article in the *Magazine* for 1843 it is possible for us to detect significant signs of growth in the character of their proceedings. At the first Quarterly Meeting of the Societies on the Todmorden Edge side of the great ' round ' a financial account was presented. Cash had been received from Todmorden, Heptonstall, Roughlee, Rossendale, and Rochdale. It amounted to a little over £6; and, with the exception of about twelve shillings, the whole of the money was expended on ' charges as per Bill ' brought in from the places we have named. Dr. Stamp considered that these ' charges ' represented the cost of entertaining the preachers when they visited the towns and villages in that part of the ' round.' The Keighley book contains accounts for three quarters following October 18, 1748. Then an interval occurs reaching from October 31, 1749, to July 25, 1754. William Grimshaw explains that the reason of the absence of the accounts was that the Quarterly Meetings were discontinued in the neighbourhood during this interval.[1] It is fortunate that the accounts for January, April, and July, 1749, have been preserved, for they contain items which arrest attention. In addition to the ' charges

[1] *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1843, 379.

as per Bill,' we find that on January 10 William Darney's wife received £1 10*s.* and £2 2*s.* on April 18. So far as we know these are the first records of allowances to a preacher's wife from a Quarterly Meeting. On July 11 there is another sign of advance. On that date these items appear: 'Gave to Halifax Society, towards defraying the Law Charge, £1 10*s.* 6*d.*'; and 'Paid a Quarter's Rent for the Preaching-Room at Milner's Barn.' Students of the evolution of Quarterly Meeting finance will perceive the significance of these entries.

In a letter written by John Bennet at the request of the Quarterly Meeting held at Woodley, in Cheshire, on April 20, 1749, we get light on the grant to Halifax. The Halifax Methodists had commenced an action against the rioters at Sowerby Bridge, and had found that the expense incurred was more than they were able to bear. Their representative went to the Quarterly Meeting held at Todmorden Edge on April 18, explained their case, and asked that a contribution might be gathered in the Societies represented by the meeting. Bennet says that the request was granted 'by the consent of the Rev. Mr. Wm. Grimshaw, and several exhorters then present.' In the Quarterly Meeting at Woodley the case of Halifax was mentioned and considered. It was unanimously agreed that collections should be made throughout the Cheshire Societies; and Bennet expressed his desire 'that each of the brethren who was able to help would contribute liberally to the fund.'

It will be remembered that the Conference held in November, 1749, directed that in the Quarterly Meetings spiritual as well as temporal affairs should be considered. At the Woodley Quarterly Meeting in April that direction had been anticipated. John Bennet has, fortunately, recorded a part of the business of the meeting which is of exceptional importance. A discussion arose on the case of a member of the Society who was neglecting to meet in class. The following letter was sent to him:

> It appears unto us from the account given in by your Leader at this Quarterly Meeting that you have frequently neglected your class, without giving sufficient reason for your so doing.
>
> Your indifferency in a matter of so great importance (viz. the salvation of the soul) is too strong a proof (to be denied) of your

insin-cerity. We think it proper to exhort you to be more careful for the time to come in observing the hour appointed for meeting.

This will not only be advantageous to your own soul, but an evidence that you have a real desire to be continued a member of our Society.

Quarterly Meeting,
Woodley,
April ye 20th, 1749.

The particulars concerning the business of the earliest Quarterly Meetings enable us to surmise the character of the advice that John Bennet would give to inquirers who followed the advice of the Conference and applied to him for information. They also assist us to see the beginning of a meeting which has gathered strength during the years, and now holds a position of great importance in the arrangements of the Methodist Church. If we include the directions of the Conference of 1749 with the details we have gleaned from John Bennet's MS. *Journal*, we get this view of the Quarterly Meeting at its commencement. It was a gathering of stewards and others at which one of the Wesleys, or a minister in association with them like William Grimshaw, or an assistant appointed by the Conference, presided. Its first business was to receive the moneys that had been contributed by the Societies in the circuit towards the fund that was under its management, and to pay the expenses incurred by the stewards in entertaining the lay preachers. In addition, in some cases the rents of preaching-houses were paid. Although the lay preachers received no money for their work, we see that, in the case of Todmorden Edge, an 'allowance' was given to a preacher's wife. When rioters were prosecuted for their attacks on the Methodists, and a Society appealed for assistance in discharging the law costs, it was allowable to contribute towards the payment of lawyers' bills. In addition to the management of a section of circuit finance the Quarterly Meeting had a function of exceptional importance. Acting on the direction of the Conference of 1749, the assistants not only held Quarterly Meetings for the administration of finance, but in them diligently inquired into the spiritual state of each Society. They were also directed to inquire at every Quarterly Meeting, and send a circumstantial account to London, 'of every remarkable conversion; and of every one who dies in the triumph of faith.'[1] In the description

[1] *Minutes*, i. 709.

of the Woodley meeting we have seen an illustration of the discharge of the duty of inquiring into the spiritual state of one Society; or, at any rate, of a member of a Society. It is also well known that in early times the holding of a Quarterly Meeting was accompanied by preaching-services that were often marked by great spiritual power. From these beginnings the investigator of Methodist origins may trace the course of the development of Quarterly Meetings.

In the *Minutes* of the 1749 Conference there is an entry which excites our curiosity. It is as follows: 'Shall we require every Helper to answer that question, "Will you print nothing till we have revised it?"' The answer is, 'By all means.' We think that we shall have to go to Yorkshire to discover the reason why this question was asked. We have met with William Darney, and have seen the good work he did in the neighbourhood of Haworth. But he had a weakness which gave John Wesley no little trouble. He imagined that he was a poet; and he strongly preferred to 'give out' in the congregations 'hymns of his own composing.' His failing is not unexampled. Wesley objected to the public singing of Darney's unchastened rhymes. His objection was strengthened when they were printed and published without being submitted to his judgement. In the outside world, crowded with bitter enemies, Wesley was held responsible for all that happened in Methodist services, and he naturally declined to accept that responsibility when hymns were sung in such services which he had not seen, and which, if he had seen them, he would have strongly disapproved. After discussion, his objection was maintained by the Conference.

We will close our description of the proceedings of the Conference of 1749 by recording its action in a matter of supreme importance. Towards the end of its business the question was asked: 'What method should we take in receiving a new Helper?' The subject had been considered at a previous Conference, and an answer had been given which left that method an open question. The time had arrived when it was necessary that a definite arrangement should be made. It was decided that the following method should be adopted:

1. Let him be recommended to us by the Assistant to whose Society he belongs.

2. Let him read and carefully weigh the Conferences, and see whether he can agree to them or no.

3. Let him be received as a Probationer, by having a book given him inscribed thus: 'You think that it is your duty to call sinners to repentance. Make full proof that God has called you hereto, and we shall be glad to act in concert with you.'

4. Let him come to the next Conference, and after examination, fasting, and prayer, be received as a Helper, by having a book given to him inscribed thus: 'So long as you freely consent and earnestly endeavour to walk according to the following rules we shall rejoice to go on with you hand in hand. We are, yours affectionately,——.'

5. Let a new book be given at every Conference, and the former returned.

We presume that by 'the Conferences' the *Doctrinal* and the *Disciplinary Minutes* are meant, as they were the only printed collections of the *Minutes* in existence at that time. It seems to have been Wesley's intention to revise these pamphlets, and to add to them year by year the new regulations of the Conference concerning doctrine and discipline. That intention, if entertained, was not carried into effect. The manner of 'receiving a new helper' has changed since that far-off time; but the delivery of the *Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline* to newly ordained ministers, containing a well-known inscription, still serves to perpetuate an ancient and necessary custom.

XIII

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

When the last year of the first half of the eighteenth century opened many people in England were harassed by the conviction that a great catastrophe was at hand. Not a few brooded over the mysterious contents of the closing book of the Bible, and sought to understand its teaching concerning the two periods of one thousand years. Some hoped that the bright millennial reign of Christ was about to begin; others were convinced that the time had arrived when 'Satan would be let loose for a season'; not a few believed that the end of the world would come. This condition of the public mind in England recurs at intervals, and we have grown accustomed to it; but in 1750 it produced distraction and alarm. Through all the terror the Wesleys went on with their work.

Conscious of the uneasiness that then prevailed, we take up a small penny pamphlet of eleven pages which is entitled *Hymns for New Year's Day*, 1750. It had been printed in Bristol by Felix Farley, and it contained seven hymns prepared by Charles Wesley for the eventful day. We see the little book in the hands of people who are assembling in the 'New Room' in Bristol at four o'clock on that Monday morning. The 'Room' fills until it is 'excessively crowded.' Charles Wesley is the preacher, and his theme is 'The Gospel Year of Jubilee.' In turning over the leaves of the hymn-book we note that four of the hymns celebrate the arrival of the year of release. They are full of the gladness that comes to a man when he realizes that Christ has ransomed him and set him free. Listening to the singing of one of the seven hymns we seem to catch the sound of familiar words. In that dimly-lighted 'Room' on that dark winter morning they are singing, 'Come, let us anew our journey pursue'; singing, we think for the first time, that hymn known to every Methodist; that hymn which, like the British

drum-beat, has gone round the world. Across the wide expanse of intervening years there comes to us its call to action. Whatever the future may hold, 'Come, let us anew our journey pursue; and never stand still till the Master appear.' It does not sound like a sharp, military marching-order. There is a promise of companionship and fellowship that will smooth the roughness of the way; there is a whisper that tells us of One who is waiting for us at the close of our journey. That thought arrests us as the singing rises and falls. Then we listen to words that arouse us:

O that each in the day
Of His coming may say,—
'I have fought my way through;
I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do!'

It seems impossible that such a prayer can be answered. We think that perhaps we may 'fight our way through'; but the thought of 'unfinished work' checks our song. But, after all, we remember that the final Judge of our actions is 'infinitely kind'; and so we listen eagerly to the closing prayer of the singers in the far distance:

O that each from his Lord
May receive the glad word,—
'Well and faithfully done;
Enter into My joy, and sit down on My throne.'

And so the singing fades away; and in the silence we think of the wonderful influence of that Christian song. Then the congregation disperses. Let us hope that, as the worshippers went on their homeward way, the winter sky was bright with stars.[1]

Early in 1750 the third volume of John Wesley's *Sermons on Several Occasions* was published. In the first advertisement of the series, which appeared in 1745, we note that it was intended that only three volumes were to be issued; but under pressure Wesley, in 1760, added another volume. It contained seven sermons; and, in order to 'make up' the book, six tracts were added. It is certain that two of these

[1] The earliest Methodist watch-nights commonly concluded with the singing of the hymn, 'Hearken to the solemn voice.' 'Come, let us anew' soon took its place, and is still sung, in Methodist watch-nights, in the first moments of the new year. See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 67.

tracts were not written by Wesley; two, as Mr. Green says, were 'probably' written by him. Only a small proportion of the tracts can be assigned to him as their author without hesitation. Leaving the fourth out of our consideration for the present, we will fix our attention on the three volumes. In examining them we notice that they contain thirty-six sermons, and that, with only two exceptions, all the texts are taken from the New Testament. It is significant that thirteen of the number are expositions of 'The Sermon on the Mount.' It will therefore be seen that the sermons rest almost entirely on a New Testament basis. The two which are founded on Old Testament texts are well known. They are entitled *The Means of Grace* and *Catholic Spirit*. In the former discourse Wesley says that the chief 'means of grace' are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures, which implies reading, hearing and meditating thereon; and receiving the Lord's supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him. He states his belief that these means have been ordained of God, 'as the ordinary channels of conveying His grace to the souls of men.' But he takes pains to guard himself against misunderstanding. He lifts the whole subject into the light and atmosphere of the New Testament. At the outset of his sermon he allows that the whole value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of religion, that, consequently, all these means, when separate from the end, are less than nothing, and vanity; that if they do not actually conduce to the knowledge and love of God they are not acceptable in His sight; yea, rather they are an abomination before Him; He is weary to bear them. Then follow words which arraign the formalists of the eighteenth century before the bar of Justice. He continues, 'Above all, if they are used as a kind of *commutation* for the religion they were designed to subserve, it is not easy to find words for the enormous folly and wickedness of thus turning God's arms against Himself; of keeping Christianity out of the heart by those very means which were ordained for the bringing of it in.' In these words we hear the trumpet-call of the Methodist Revival. Those who think that while the churches of the eighteenth century needed to be aroused by such a warning, but that the necessity for its utterance has passed, are nursing a delusion.

It is not necessary to urge the Christian character of the sermon on *Catholic Spirit*. It sets before us a lofty ideal at which most people glance with approval. And yet who has not read with some reproach of conscience the closing words of this discourse?

> A man of a catholic spirit is one who, in the manner above mentioned, gives his hand to all whose hearts are right with his heart: One who knows how to value, and praise God for, all the advantages he enjoys with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true scriptural manner of worshipping Him, and, above all, his union with a congregation fearing God and working righteousness: One who, retaining these blessings with the strictest care, keeping them as the apple of his eye, at the same time loves—as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as members of Christ and children of God, as joint partakers now of the present Kingdom of God, and fellow-heirs of His eternal Kingdom—all, of whatever opinion, or worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; who love God and man; who, rejoicing to please and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works. He is the man of the truly catholic spirit, who bears all these continually upon his heart; who, having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and longing for their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer as well as to plead their cause before men; who speak comfortably to them, and labours, by all his words, to strengthen their hands in God. He assists to the uttermost of his power in all things, spiritual and temporal. He is ready to spend and to be spent for them, yea to lay down his life for their sake.[1]

If we add Wesley's sermon 'A Caution against Bigotry' to his great plea for 'Catholic Spirit' we shall see that, in the dreary desert of the eighteenth century he was a herald of teaching that is beginning to prevail in some of the Christian Churches.

When trying to detect the sermons in 'the first three volumes' which are strictly theological discourses we find ourselves in a difficulty. We cannot include 'The Nature of Enthusiasm,' for that is clearly 'apologetic,' inasmuch as it is a defence of the Methodists against a frequently repeated charge. But in what category shall we place the sermons preached before the University in St. Mary's, Oxford? They are entitled 'Salvation by Faith,' 'The Almost Christian,' 'Awake, Thou that Sleepest,' and 'Scriptural Christianity.' Are those sermons, that roused the anger of the University authorities,

[1] Wesley's *Works*, v. 188, 503–504, 8vo ed.

only sedate theological treatises? After calm exposition they became ardent appeals to those who were present to practise the neglected duties of the Christian life. The same may be said of the remainder of the *Sermons*. In the 'Preface' to the first volume, published in 1746, John Wesley writes: 'The following sermons contain the substance of what I have been preaching for between eight and nine years last past. During that time I have frequently spoken in public on every subject in the ensuing collection: and I am not conscious that there is any one point of doctrine, on which I am accustomed to speak in public, which is not here, incidentally, if not professedly, laid before every Christian reader.' We have followed him from place to place, and have listened to his sermons in St. Mary's, Oxford, in the churches where he was permitted to speak, in his preaching-houses, and in the open air. In his early morning services we have heard the expositor of a wide range of doctrine. Everywhere we have heard the teaching which pervades the published *Sermons*. That teaching was direct and clear; it went to the conscience and heart of the crowd. It concerned doctrines to which men who were convinced of sin and longing for salvation listened with pathetic eagerness. When they entered into the experience of assured pardon the teaching of Wesley led them to the path traced by apostolic hands in the pages of the New Testament—the path on which shone the beauteous light of holiness. The preacher explained and enforced the doctrines of the Master, and insisted on the necessity and the blessedness of imitating and obeying Him. In justification of his teaching he pointed to the Bible as his standard of appeal. It is now admitted that the evangelical doctrines he taught changed the tone of the religious life of England. And the doctrines which effected that marvellous change in the public mind and character are to be found in the *Sermons*, which still hold their high place in the Methodist Church. They are not a mere standard of orthodoxy, which is apt to vary in accordance with the change of fashion in religious belief; they are expositions of doctrines which must be constantly proclaimed.

An event occurred in January, 1750, which now calls for record. The writer of *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* mentions it, but does not state all the facts of the case. Those facts were obscured by clouds in the past;

in recent times the sky has cleared. On August 2–3, 1749, John and Charles Wesley held an important conference with George Whitefield and Howell Harris in the 'New Room,' Bristol. In John Wesley's *Journal* there is a considerable gap at this point, but Charles Wesley gives us a little light. He says: 'Our Conference this week with Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Harris came to naught; I think through their flying off.' We are left for a time to exercise our imagination on the question of the object of this meeting and the meaning of 'flying off.' But at last light has reached us. It is furnished in an important document that once belonged to Dr. James Dixon; afterwards it came into the possession of Mrs. Aykroyd of Harrogate, and was published in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*.[1] Tyerman, in his *Life of Whitefield*, made a good guess 'at the object of the meeting' when he asked, 'Was this another attempt to amalgamate Wesley's and Whitefield's Societies?' He nearly hit the mark. The MS. is in the handwriting of John Wesley; it is endorsed by Charles Wesley, 'Aug. 2, 1749. Vain agreement.' A reason for the obscurity that has veiled this incident may be found in the fact that at the close of the meeting it was agreed that 'in order to facilitate an Union in carrying on the Work of God,' each member of the little company should take a copy of the minutes of the Conference in order that he might read them, as he found occasion, to some of the preachers and to a few 'prudent persons' of his flock. But he was not to suffer any copy to be taken, nor allow his own copy to go out of his hands. With such safeguards it is surprising that John Wesley's own copy should have survived. We can understand that, in the circumstances of the time, the publication of the 'minutes' would have been injudicious; but in the present day the embargo has lost its force.

When we read the report of the 'conversations' we see that the meeting was an attempt to bring the Wesleys, Whitefield, and Harris closer together in affection and judgement; and 'in jointly carrying on the work of their common Master.' It was unanimously agreed: '1. To believe no evil of each other, till the accused has answered for himself. 2. To speak no unkind or slighting word of each other, and to defend one another against any that do speak so. 3. Not willingly to

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, v. 108–110.

speak of each other's opinions in such a manner as to make him either odious or contemptible.' This olive-branch being accepted by all, a successful attempt was made to reach a united decision on the nature and cause of Justification. The next day the question of Predestination came under consideration. Each man seems to have held fast his own convictions on this subject. The outcome of the conversation on this point was marked by the spirit of compromise. The Arminians and Calvinists retained their several positions, but it was agreed: '1. Not to preach controversially either for or against Absolute Election, Irresistible Grace, or Final Perseverance. 2. To avoid in preaching the use of any such terms as naturally tend to revive the controversy. 3. To confine ourselves to the very language of Scripture as far as possible. 4. To use each other's expressions, mixed with our own, as far as we can honestly. 5. Continually to maintain that man's whole salvation is of God, and his whole damnation of himself.'

When we read these conclusions we get some light on Charles Wesley's phrase 'flying off.' A compromise between men who hold contrary convictions on vital truths is generally the starting point of new discussions. Sooner or later the sovereign voice of conscience speaks, and then compromise disappears.

The last subject of discussion was the manner in which the doctrine of Perfection was to be preached. The subject is placed in the class of 'points where we do not think alike,' but the decisions do not reveal any sign of condemnation of the doctrine itself. It was agreed not to preach controversially either for or against the doctrine; and to drop the expressions, 'Sinless Perfection' and the 'Inbeing of Sin.' We know that John Wesley had a strong objection to the first phrase. The danger of the second is evident. If sin is a substance that can be removed from a man, as by an operation, the temptation to wild enthusiasm is apt to become irresistible. The little company expressed its determination to exhort all to press on to Perfection in the Holy Law of Love 'by universal inward and outward conformity to the life and death of Christ.' That points to the place where the most earnest Christian people of all Churches will meet.

Charles Wesley's endorsements of documents do not always describe their contents with precision. We have given an

illustration of the fact when dealing with the licence of the newly-built ' Room ' in the Horsefair, Bristol.[1] The character of the handwriting in that case creates a suspicion not easily allayed ; but it is clear that he endorsed the report of the conference we have described with the words ' Vain agreement.' Whatever may be said of the failure of the compromises on disputed points of doctrine, it cannot be doubted that John Wesley and George Whitefield were drawn nearer together in affection by the conversations that took place in August, 1749, in the ' New Room,' Bristol. We hold that the greatest power in effecting the ultimate reconciliation of the two men was not argument, but the return of an old affection. It came back with a strength that silenced their disputes. It was a triumph of the ' King of Love.'

After the Conference in Bristol, in 1749, John Wesley began that journey to the North of England which we have described. He was accompanied by Grace Murray. Whitefield stayed for a time in Bristol ; then he set off to the West of England, and afterwards visited London, staying there for a short time. Then he journeyed to the North of England. He reached Newcastle, and on October 3, was present at the marriage of John Bennet and Grace Murray. The next day he was in Leeds and saw John Wesley, who was prostrated with grief. Whitefield did his best to comfort him. In that distressing interview the two men found each other once more. Whitefield's sympathy touched Wesley's heart ; the old misunderstandings were forgotten ; the strong mutual affection returned. What was the result ? It must be remembered that Charles Wesley, after hurrying on the marriage of John Bennet and Grace Murray, went through a process of enlightenment. His natural impetuosity was not controlled by perfect knowledge ; he spoke words of ' high disdain and insult to his heart's best brother.' Then the clouds began to drift away. He listened to explanations. On October 8, 1749, he wrote a surprising letter to Ebenezer Blackwell, of London. In it he says, ' George Whitefield, and my brother, and I, are one—a threefold cord which shall no more be broken. The week before last I waited on our friend George to our house in Newcastle, and gave him full possession of our pulpit and people's hearts, as full as was in my power to give. . . . At

[1] See *ante*, 56.

Leeds we met my brother, who gave honest George the right hand of fellowship, and attended him everywhere to our societies. Some in London will be alarmed at the news; but it is the Lord's doing, as they, I doubt not, will by and by acknowledge.'[1] When John Wesley returned to Newcastle, a few days after this letter was written, he says in his *Journal*, 'I was now satisfied that God had sent Mr. Whitefield to Newcastle in an acceptable time; many of those who had little thought of God before, still retain the impressions they received from him.' From these facts it is evident that in 1749 the reconciliation of the Wesleys and Whitefield was complete, and that sympathy and affection played a conspicuous part in the healing of the breach that had divided them.

The facts we have stated show that the reconciliation of the Wesleys and Whitefield took place in 1749. We have produced them in order to correct an impression that has been made by a statement in the well-known *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon*, written by Aaron Crossley Hobart Seymour, who describes himself on the title-page of the book as 'A member of the Houses of Shirley and Hastings.' The book contains much valuable information, but some of its statements awake the vigilance of a cautious reader. Describing the relations of the Wesleys and Whitefield at the close of 1749, the biographer says that Lady Huntingdon 'determined on an endeavour to heal the differences that then existed between these great and good men. For this benevolent purpose she wrote to Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Wesley, urging on them to love as brethren, to let controversy alone, and to labour more zealously for the service of their Lord and Master. This advice seems to have had the desired effect.' On January 12, 1750, Whitefield replied to Lady Huntingdon's letter, and told her that he had offered John Wesley to assist occasionally at his chapel. That offer was accepted. On Friday, January 19, Whitefield preached at West Street, and on the next Sunday John Wesley preached in the Tabernacle. The following morning Howell Harris preached at the Foundery to 'an overflowing auditory.' The biographer sums up the effects of Lady Huntingdon's efforts at pacification by saying, 'From this time those two great men always spoke of each other in

[1] Tyerman's *Life of Whitefield*, ii. 236.

the most affectionate manner, and assisted each other in their labours wherever they providentially met; and kept up a correspondence by letter while Mr. Whitefield lived.'[1]

Lady Huntingdon was delighted with the result of her work as a peace maker. But the stern voice of duty compels us to say that it is clear she did not know that the reconciliation between John Wesley and George Whitefield had been effected before she made her appeal, and that Whitefield had already preached in the Orphan House in Newcastle. The biographer's picture of 'the reconciliation' is interesting, but it does not strictly observe the laws of perspective.

We have noticed the fact that many people in England were disturbed by the conviction that 1750 would be a year when this country would be overtaken by terrible calamities. Watching the signs in the heavens and on the earth, they soon found reasons for dread. In January a very remarkable Aurora Borealis appeared in the sky to the north-east. Smollett, in describing it, says that it was of 'a deep and dusky red colour, like the reflection of some great fire, for which it was by many people mistaken; and the coruscations, unlike those that are generally observed, did not meet in the zenith, but in a point some degrees to the southward.' He also tells us that February was ushered in by terrible peals of thunder, flashes of lightning, and such a tempest of wind, hail, and rain as overwhelmed the inhabitants of Bristol, where it chiefly raged, with fear and consternation. But more terrifying events were to follow.

February 8, 1750, was a day long remembered by the eighteenth-century citizens of London and Westminster. In Smollett's *Continuation of the History of England*, published in 1760, there is a vivid account of the earthquake which shook many houses with great violence. The shock extended through the cities of London and Westminster, and was felt on both sides of the Thames, from Greenwich to the westward of London. In the present day we have become so familiar with the destructive force of earthquakes in some parts of the world that we should look upon such a slight movement of the earth in England as only a matter for interesting conversation. But we cannot understand its effect on the people of the eighteenth century if we constantly measure their capacity

[1] *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon*, i. 117–119.

for terror by our own standards. On March 8, 1750, between five and six o'clock in the morning, the people of London were affrighted by a more violent shock. Smollett says that it was 'abundantly more alarming. . . . It was preceded by a succession of thick, low flashes of lightning, and a rumbling noise, like that of a heavy carriage rolling over a hollow pavement. The shock itself consisted of repeated vibrations, which lasted some seconds, and violently shook every house from top to bottom: yet no life was lost, and no house overthrown by this concussion, though it was so dreadful as to threaten an immediate dissolution of the globe. The circumstance, however, did not fail to make a deep impression upon ignorant, weak, and superstitious minds, which were the more affected by the consideration that the two shocks were periodical; that the second, which happened exactly one month after the first, had been the more violent; and that the next, increasing in proportion, might be attended by the most dismal consequences.'[1]

It was at this point, when nerves were becoming seriously 'exalted,' that 'a fanatic soldier' made his appearance in the streets of London. He called men to repentance; he warned them that on the same day of April an earthquake would totally destroy the cities of London and Westminster. Many believed that his prophecy would be fulfilled. The terror mounted high. 'The churches were crowded with penitent sinners: the sons of riot and profligacy were overawed into sobriety and decorum. The streets no longer resounded with execrations, or the noise of brutal licentiousness; and the hand of charity was liberally opened.'[2] The roads from London were encumbered with the horses and carriages of people who were flying from the devoted city; and, as the time for the fulfilment of the prophecy approached, the open fields that skirt London began to be filled with people who were afraid to remain in their houses. We are able to quote the testimony of an eye-witness. Writing to a friend on April 5, Charles Wesley says: 'Yesterday I saw the Westminster end of the town full of coaches, and crowds flying out of the reach of divine justice, with astonishing precipitation. Their panic was caused by a poor madman's prophecy: last night they were

[1] Smollett's *Continuation of the History of England*, i. 78.
[2] Ibid., i. 79.

all to be swallowed up. The vulgar were in almost as great consternation as their betters. Most of them watched all night : multitudes in the fields and open places : several in their coaches. Many removed their goods. London looked like a sacked city. A lady, just stepping into her coach to escape, dropped down dead. Many came all night knocking at the Foundery door, and begging admittance for God's sake. Our poor people were calm and quiet, as at another time.'[1] On April 8, supposed by many to be the fatal day, Hyde Park and other open spaces were crowded with an incredible number of people assembled in chairs, in chaises, and coaches, as well as on foot, who waited in most fearful suspense, until morning and the return of day disproved the truth of the dreaded prophecy. 'Then,' says Smollett, 'their fears vanished : they returned to their respective habitations in a transport of joy : they were soon reconciled to their abandoned vices, which they seemed to resume with redoubled affection, and once more bade defiance to the vengeance of heaven.' And so the failure of mere terror to effect moral revolution was once more illustrated.

Through the reign of terror the Wesleys pursued their work. Charles Wesley began to preach once more 'with the old power.' The great thunderstorm in Bristol finds a record in his *Journal.* On Wednesday, January 31, he says, 'We were waked at two by a clap of thunder, unusually loud and terrible. My partner was much frightened.' The next day we see him and his wife hurrying through the rain to see Dr. Middleton, their friend and physician. It was some time before Mrs. Charles Wesley recovered from the consequences of the shock. Her husband took her to Ludlow when she had recovered strength for her journey ; then, on March 1, he arrived in London, and Edward Perronet supplied him with a lodging. The city was seething with excitement, but he devoted himself to visiting the sick and preaching to the people. The dreaded day, March 8, was approaching ; but, as we follow him on Monday, March 5, we seem to forget the threatening peril. He is making his way to the house of one of his sisters. She is at the point of death. We saw her standing in the room at the Foundery when her mother passed away ; and we thought that we heard her voice when John Wesley and his sister obeyed the request, 'Children, as soon as I am released sing a psalm of praise to

[1] *Journal,* ii. 70

God.'[1] No one of the singers in that room had greater reason to rejoice in the hope of 'release.' Let us read Charles Wesley's entry in his *Journal* on March 5, 1750: 'I prayed by my sister Wright, a gracious, tender, trembling soul; a bruised reed, which the Lord will not break.' On March 14 we see him once more by her bedside. She is 'very near the haven, yet still in darkness, doubts and fears; against hope believing in hope.' A week later he called again at the house, 'a few minutes after her spirit was set at liberty.' In the evening he explained at West Street Chapel those solemn words, 'Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.' Those who were present listened in the silence of a great sympathy. They seemed partakers both of his sorrow and his joy. We scarcely recognize his sister under the name of Mrs. Wright. We always think of her as Hetty Wesley. On March 26 Charles Wesley followed her to her quiet grave, and 'wept with them that wept.'

Both before and after the greatest shock of the earthquake Charles Wesley continued his work. He was in full sympathy with the varying experiences of his people. The psalms and the prophecies gave up new meanings as he read and expounded them at the Foundery, West Street, and Snowsfields. In times of national peril our Bibles seem to open naturally at Psalm xlvi. It was so during the Great War. We note that Charles Wesley, on March 9, the day after the greatest shock of the earthquake, preached at West Street from that psalm. 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.' He tells us that he preached 'with very great awakening power.' We can see the brightening faces of the congregation when he cried, 'The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.' But Charles Wesley was not content with preaching; he set the people singing. He wrote hymns exactly suited to such a time. One of them, which lingers in *The Methodist Hymn-Book*, has not lost its inspiration. It turns our thoughts away from 'a tottering world' to our 'steadfast mansion; built immovably secure; built eternal in the skies.'[2]

[1] *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 81. [2] Hymn 847.

Towards the end of April Charles Wesley left London. On April 20 he reached Ludlow, and rejoiced to find his wife restored to health. He stayed there ten or eleven days, preaching every night and morning at Ludlow or Leominster. On May 2 he was in Bristol; on May 15 he set out with Mrs. Vazeille and others for Ludlow. At a later stage we shall have more to say about this lady; we will now content ourselves by recording the facts that, during her nine days' stay, the Gwynne family 'showed her all the civility and love that they could show: and she seemed equally pleased with them'; and that, in June, Charles Wesley and his wife 'took up their quarters' for eight or nine days at her house in London.

We must now follow John Wesley as he passes through this eventful period. He was in London on Thursday, February 8, when the first shock of the earthquake threw the city into a panic. On February 9 he held a watch-night at West Street Chapel. At about eleven o'clock he suddenly remembered that it was 'the very day and hour when, forty years ago,' he was taken out of the flames at Epworth Rectory. He stopped, and gave a short account of his escape. The congregation was deeply moved, and 'the voice of praise and thanksgiving went up on high.'[1]

On February 27 John Wesley, with much reluctance, left London, and on March 2 reached Bristol. Six days afterwards, when the second earthquake shook London, he held what has been called 'a conference' in Bristol. Myles records it; and in the revised edition of the first volume of the *Minutes of Conference*, and in the Standard Edition of John Wesley's *Journal*, in a note, it is so styled. John Wesley's own entry in his *Journal* is: 'Thurs. 8. I desired all the preachers that were in Bristol to meet me at four in the afternoon; and so every day while I was in the town.'[2] As he did not leave Bristol until March 19 we think that considerable verge must be given to the word 'conference.' It is probable that he called the preachers together, not only for consultation, but for other purposes, such as the studying of books that would help them to enlarge their theological knowledge. His work in Bristol was soon interrupted by serious news he received from Ireland. He was convinced that it was his duty to go there as soon as

[1] The actual date of the Epworth fire was February 9, 1709. See John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 454 *note*.

[2] *Journal*, iii. 456.

possible ; so he set out with a companion on March 19 for the New Passage. We look upon that companion with special interest. We have seen him before in Newcastle. For about three years he had been one of Wesley's trusted lay preachers. Until 1802, when he died, he bore an honoured name among the Methodist people. Even in the present day all who are intimately acquainted with the history of early Methodism remember the faithful service of Christopher Hopper. In his ' Journal ' in *Early Methodist Preachers* there are notes of this visit to Ireland.[1]

It was not until April 6 that John Wesley and his companion landed at Dublin. Tempestuous weather detained them in Wales. When he arrived in Ireland Wesley at once began to examine certain reports which had reached him. He found that they had been much exaggerated, and for a moment he was inclined to regret he had left England. But he soon found his presence in Ireland was needed at this crisis. On April 4 Jonathan Reeves came from Cork and gave him descriptions of the reign of terror that had existed there for many months. In Wesley's *Journal* and in the first volume of Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland* full particulars of the outrageous conduct of the Butler mob and the local magistrates will be found.[2]

At this point we are concerned with John Wesley's personal experiences. From them he gained an idea of the rough road along which the Cork Methodists had travelled during his absence from Ireland. We agree with Mr. Crookshank when he says, ' For duration and intensity it may be doubted whether the annals of Methodism supply anything like a parallel to these infamous riots.'[3] Wesley, who was an authority on mob violence, evidently was of the same opinion. On May 19, 1750, he rode to Cork to see for himself. He was entertained by Alderman Pembroke, who had been mayor of the city in 1733. The next day being Sunday, Wesley preached to a large and deeply attentive congregation on Hammond's Marsh. Having heard that the Mayor of Cork intended to hinder his preaching there again in the evening, he sent two messengers to him to inquire into the correctness of the rumour. The mayor said to them plainly ' I will have no more preaching ;

[1] i. 202–204. [2] See Crookshank's *History*, chapters iii. and iv.
[3] *History*, i. 51.

and, if Mr. Wesley attempts to preach, I am prepared for him.' Mr. Crookshank shall continue the story.

> Wesley, unwilling to give offence, therefore relinquished his purpose of preaching out of doors, and conducted the service in the room held by the Society; but no sooner had he commenced than the mayor came with the city drummers and an immense rabble, and continued drumming outside as long as Wesley continued preaching. On leaving Wesley was hemmed in by the mob. Observing one of the serjeants standing by, he desired him to keep the King's peace: but the civic officer replied, 'Sir, I have no orders to do that.' And so, amid a shower of missiles, the servant of God had to make his way through a brutish mob to the house of a Mr. Jenkins. Here a stout Romanist stood at the door to hinder his entrance; but she received a blow, intended for Wesley, that brought her to the ground, and thus he passed in.
>
> But many of the congregation were more roughly handled, particularly Mr. Jones, who was covered with dirt, and by a merciful Providence escaped with his life. The main body of the mob then went to the preaching-room, and for at least the third time brought out the seats, pulled down the doors and window-frames, tore up the floor and whatever woodwork remained, part of which they turned to their own account, and the rest they burned in the open street. It is worthy of note that one of the rioters, having died soon after, was buried in a coffin made of two of the benches thus stolen from the Methodists.[1]

Wesley left Cork the next day, and the riots were continued. Just a week after he had gone he received news which proved to be a gleam of light from a dark sky. Once more the soldiers in Ireland come into our view. Many of them who were quartered in Cork had attended the Methodist services and had come under the power of the gospel. Through their influence the mob was at last intimidated. The mayor interviewed the colonel, but got no encouragement from him. The colonel told the mob that they must make no riots; and Mr. Crookshank says, 'Thus the first stand for peace was taken in this long-distracted city.' Wesley visited Cork again and preached at the barrack gate to a large congregation of serious people, the mob standing about one hundred yards off. At the close of the service the soldiers, who had kept together near the gate, took their position in front and rear of the Methodists, and guarded them as they walked through a great crowd to Alderman Pembroke's house. These soldiers kept the mob in check during the rest of the term of the mayor's year of

[1] *History*, i. 64–66.

office. He was succeeded by Mr. Robert Wrixon, who took a firm stand against the mob, and ended the riots which had brought disgrace on the city.[1]

When John Wesley's visit to Ireland was drawing to a close he had a notable interview with a young man. He resided at New Market, and was a class-leader there. The writer of his biography describes a class as 'a little company of Christian friends, mutually agreed to meet together weekly in order to their furtherance in the way of godliness'—a definition worthy of remembrance. The young man must be allowed to state 'the business of a leader.' He says, 'My business was: 1. To see each person in my class once a week; and, if any were absent, to inquire into the cause. 2. Whenever we met together to sing psalms or hymns and to pray with them. 3. To examine how their souls prospered, and what progress they had made the preceding week in "the way of the Lord." Whether they were unanimously determined to serve God with their whole heart? If any had fallen into sin, they were reproved; if tempted, they were comforted and encouraged; and those who ran well, adorning their profession in all things, were exhorted still to press forward, and give glory to God.'

'After a faithful and friendly examination of each other (between which and the Popish auricular confession, with which some have erroneously or unkindly paralleled it, there is scarcely the most distant resemblance), they concluded with praising God, and prayers suited to their several conditions.' That description lifts the veil of the past, and brings the picture of an early Methodist class-meeting into view. The biographer also tells us that this young man 'met with the whole Society two or three times a week; when, with praises and prayers, there was always a word of exhortation preached or read. And it pleased God to testify His approbation thereof by the singular display of His presence amongst them; by replenishing their souls with abundance of His grace and heavenly benediction.' Trained by constant attendance at the class-meeting and at the society-meeting, the Methodists lived as brethren, and strove together for 'the hope of the gospel.' They were of one heart, and of one mind, in the presence of God. They realized in a high degree what is meant by 'the communion of saints.'

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 67.

It is no wonder that the young man whom we are watching, living under such conditions, should feel a strong desire to preach, and that the desire should be followed by a strong conviction that it was his duty to become a preacher of the gospel. He waited on Wesley and asked his advice. When we say that the young man was Thomas Walsh we see the significance of the interview. He tells us that Wesley's advice was 'sweetly and humbly' given—a statement that gives us a glimpse of the great evangelist. Wesley told him to write to him afterwards. He did so, giving a brief account of his conversion to God, and of his conviction concerning his 'call to preach.' Wesley was much impressed by him, and sent him the following letter: 'It is hard to judge what God has called you to till trial is made. Therefore, when you have an opportunity, you may go to Shronell, and spend two or three days with the people there. Speak to them in Irish.'[1] Walsh followed Wesley's direction. He went to Shronell, a village in Tipperary, about thirty miles from New Market. One of his brothers and a friend accompanied him. Then the next day he commenced, in a large barn, his remarkable career as a preacher. We shall meet with him again. The term of his ministry in Ireland and England was brief; it only lasted for nine years; but during that time he quietly took his place among the most memorable preachers of the Methodist Church.

[1] The process employed by Wesley in the case of Thomas Walsh, including the giving of 'a note to preach,' has persisted to the present time.

XIV

DORSET

When we remember the exhausting experiences through which John Wesley had passed before his visit to Ireland, and the state of his health at that time, we glance over the records in his *Journal* fearing we may find some sign of the weakening of his purpose to live and die the evangelist of his country. The persistence of his determination was essential to the success of his mission. It is certain that sometimes he was tempted to abandon his work. It would be a mistake to represent him as a man who stood on high, far beyond the reach of the temptations that assail and cripple us. He was not a super-man. The dazzling perfection of 'the super-man' blinds us. He gives us no encouragement. The man of like passions with ourselves, who does splendid work, we can see and understand. His example often rebukes us; but we sometimes find that rebuke is only another form of encouragement. Let us linger for a moment over an entry in Wesley's *Journal* on June 21, 1750. Two days before he had gone back to Dublin, and had found 'all things there in a more prosperous state than ever before.' Then he left the city and returned to Closeland, where he preached in the evening to a little, earnest company. The quietness of the country, the attention of the small congregation appealed to him. The service being over, we watch him as he writes: 'Oh, who should drag me into a great city, if I did not know there is another world?' The man who has become accustomed to village preaching will understand the meaning of that sentence; but it is when we read the next that our fears are roused. 'How gladly could I spend the remainder of a busy life in solitude and retirement!' If he had never again expressed the same sentiment we might have passed it by without remark; but in moments of despondency, of which it is a symptom, we often hear this sigh.

It is well to know that all things prospered in Dublin. But in Cork, and other parts of Ireland, the Methodists at this time were subjected to fierce persecution. In a letter Wesley wrote to his friend Mr. Blackwell on July 21 he states facts which enable us to see the situation.

> I have had so hurrying a time for two or three months as I scarce ever had before; such a mixture of storms and clear sunshine, of huge applause and huge opposition. . . . That any of the Methodist preachers are alive is a clear proof of an over-ruling Providence; for we know not where we are safe. A week or two ago, in a time of perfect peace, twenty people assaulted one of our preachers, and a few that were riding with him, near Limerick. He asked their captain what they intended to do, who calmly answered, 'To murder you!' and accordingly presented a pistol, which snapped twice or thrice. Mr. Fenwick then rode away. The other pursued, and fired after him. Three of his companions they left for dead. But some of the neighbouring justices of the peace did not take it well; so they procured the cut-throats to be apprehended; and it is supposed they will be in danger of transportation, though murder is a venial sin in Ireland.[1]

It was during this visit to Ireland that John Wesley wrote a letter to Captain Gallatin, then quartered in Manchester, explaining why the Methodist preaching-houses had not been licensed. We have seen that the 'New Room' in Bristol was 'recorded' on October 17, 1748, 'as a place of meeting of a congregation or assembly for religious worship, conformable to the statute made in the reign of William and Mary, intituled an Act for Exempting their Majesties' Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws,' such as the Conventicle Act and the other persecuting Acts passed in the reign of Charles II.[2] At first John Wesley hesitated to avail himself of the provisions of the Toleration Act. His principal objection to such a proceeding was that the Methodists would be obliged to describe themselves as Dissenters before they could obtain relief. We can understand his objection when we remember that so late as 1766 he maintained that the Methodists were not Dissenters 'in the only sense which our law acknowledges: namely, persons who believe it is sinful to attend the service of the Church: for we do attend it at all opportunities.'[3] So long as he held this view of the meaning of the word

[1] *Journal*, iii. 486 *note*. [2] See *ante*, 57, 58. [3] *Minutes of Conference*, i. 58, 59.

'dissenter' we can understand his hesitation. But he saw the advantages of registering his preaching-houses, and he considered several ways of escaping from his difficulties. After consulting the Recorder of Chester, he was led to favour the following plan. At the Quarter Sessions a note with these or the like words should be presented to the justices: 'A. B. desires his house in C. D. may be licensed for public worship.' Then by order of the Bench the house should be registered, sixpence being paid to the clerk. If Wesley thought that such a simple act of registration would exempt a house from the provisions of the Conventicle Act he was mistaken. Until the Act was repealed its provisions would over-ride the slight barrier of such a certificate. From Wesley's letter to Captain Gallatin it would appear that in 1750 'the house at Leeds and some others' had been licensed. But the Methodists had to travel along a weary road before the Conventicle Act disappeared from the Statute Book.[1]

On July 22 John Wesley and Christopher Hopper went on board a ship bound for Bristol. She had little ballast and no goods. If the sea remained calm all would be well; if a storm came she would roll as if she would be overset. The next night when she was in the Bristol Channel, a severe storm broke upon her. About eleven o'clock Wesley was wakened by 'a huge, confused noise.' He found that a vehement squall of wind, thunder, and rain was upon them, and that the sailors were at their wits' end. They could only see across the ship when the lightning was glaring in their eyes. The ship was off Lundy, an island which abounds in steep cliffs and shelving granite rocks. In the sunshine of a quiet, almost cloudless summer day, the island is a beautiful picture as we watch it from the distant shore of 'the Golden Bay.' But when the winds are roaring, and the waves are leaping up the cliffs, the mind is gloomed by the memories of great shipwrecks. In that wild night, when Wesley was in the Bristol Channel, he was aware of the danger that threatened the ship. She was between the Welsh sands and the rocks of Lundy. The captain thought that the best plan was to take in the sails and let her drive. Wesley describes the

[1] Wesley's letter to Captain Gallatin was in the collection of the late Mr. George Stampe. See John Wesley's *Journal*, iii. 486.

effect. 'The motion then was wonderful. It blew a storm; and, the wind being contrary to the tide, the sea ran mountain-high. . . . It was intensely dark, and neither the captain nor any man else knew where we were; only that we were tossing in a bad, narrow channel, full of shoals, and rocks, and sands.' Those who are accustomed to go down to the sea in sailing-ships will picture the scene. What was to be done? Let us listen to Wesley. 'But does not God hear the prayer? Mr. Hopper and I believed it our duty to make the trial again; and in a very few moments the wind was small, the sea fell, and the clouds dispersed; so we put up a little sail, and went on quietly and slowly till the morning dawned. About nine in the evening we reached The Pill, where I took horse and rode to Bristol.'[1]

On July 26 Wesley walked to Kingswood. The school was giving him much concern. It was failing to answer its purpose. He found 'the family' there considerably lessened. He made searching inquiries, and once more we listen to the note of despondency. We can hear him sigh as he makes this entry in his *Journal*: 'I wonder how I am withheld from dropping the whole design, so many difficulties have continually attended it. Yet if this counsel is of God, it shall stand, and all hindrances shall turn into blessings.' Charles Wesley's 'raven note' does not deeply affect us. We know that he will soon be singing with the lark at heaven's gate; but his brother's despondency at this time suggests a mood of mind which was threatening to become habitual. We are haunted by his confession that, when leaving London for his journeys to Bristol and Ireland he did so 'reluctantly.' We have wondered if he has a secret which he is carefully guarding.

On July 30 John Wesley, with a companion, rode out of Bristol, and set his face towards the land of his ancestors. It rained heavily. By the time he reached Shepton Mallet he was well drenched to the 'very soles of his feet.' It was useless to go farther that day; so the travellers stayed the night there. The next morning they reached Shaftesbury, that town set on a hill which has been so vividly described by Sir Frederick Treves in his *Highways and Byways in Dorset*. We have desired to see Shaftesbury because we have lost

[1] *Journal*, iii. 487. 'The Pill' is well known to those who have sailed up the Avon. It derives its name from the Welsh word *pwl*, which means an inlet or pool. In Wesley's time it was a port of embarkation for Ireland and America.

sight of that valiant soldier John Haime, and we may find him in his native town.

In the war during which the battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy were fought John Haime was a dragoon in the Queen's Regiment. When the war ended he returned to England, and was discharged from the Army. He waited on John Wesley, and asked to be permitted to labour with him as a travelling preacher. Wesley was willing, and he was sent into a circuit. He opened his mind to John Wesley, who listened to his story of sore temptation which had shaken his steadfastness. After continuing for some time in circuit work, Wesley made him one of his travelling companions. Haime gives us another opportunity of seeing the real Wesley. He says: 'Mr Wesley took me to travel with him. He knew I was fallen from my steadfastness; but he knew, likewise, how to bear with me. And when I was absent he comforted me by his letters, which were a means, under God, of saving me from utter despair.' In his 'Life' in *Early Methodist Preachers* he gives one of Wesley's letters, written from London on June 21, 1748. It is one of those inspiring letters which Wesley was accustomed to write to his preachers when the burden of their hard life was becoming too heavy for them to bear. The letter to Haime closes with words that still strengthen the heart of a downcast man: 'Mercy and peace shall not forsake you. Through every threatening cloud look up; and wait for happy days.'

But Wesley's consolation did not sweep away the clouds. In a miserable condition of mind Haime went to Shaftesbury to see his friends. He spent there several days. His former acquaintances came to him and said, 'What news?' His reply was, 'Good news! Christ died to save sinners.' They stared at him, and probably thought he was mad. One day, being half asleep, he had a startling experience. Those who are acquainted with his history will remember that, at the battle of Fontenoy his regiment was exposed for seven hours to the hottest fire of the enemy. At the end of that time a cannon-ball killed his horse under him. An officer cried out aloud, 'Haime, where is your God now?' He answered, 'Sir, He is here with me; and He will bring me out of this battle.' Soon there was another discharge from the hostile batteries. The officer who had shouted to him fell from

his saddle, dead. Haime got free from his own horse, which had fallen on him. Then he walked away, praising God. At Fontenoy he could say, 'God is with me'; at Shaftesbury he seemed to be forsaken; he served a God who was very far off. But as he sat and mused, the voice that had spoken to him so often spoke again. He says that he was, as it were, thunder-struck with an inward voice, saying, 'What doest thou here?' At once he was face to face with conscience and his divine Master. He cried to the Lord for mercy, and gave notice that on the Sunday following he would preach in a place at the end of the town, where four ways met. The town and villages around were alarmed; and, at the time appointed, there were three or four thousand people assembled to hear him. He got on a wall and preached. His inward trouble seemed suspended. He was a free man, preaching 'deliverance to the captives and the opening of the prison door to those who were bound.' Twelve, if not fourteen, persons were then convinced of sin. In a few weeks fifty were joined together in society; a large room was secured, and in it he preached several times a week.

This work stirred up the anger of the adversary. On the day when a meeting was to be held to consider the subject of building a preaching-house John Haime was apprehended and put in prison, two men having sworn that he had made a riot. After appearing before the mayor and aldermen, he was hurried away to Dorchester and shut up in the jail there. He little thought that he was going through the experiences of John Westley, of Winterbourne Whitchurch. But he followed his example and preached to the prisoners. Once again we catch sight of members of the Society of Friends who show sympathy with the Methodists. Two Shaftesbury Quakers became bound for his appearance at the Quarter Sessions. When he had been in prison for eight days, one of them came to Dorchester to fetch him out, and brought money to pay the prison-fees and all expenses. When he returned to Shaftesbury he began preaching again. Good fortune attended him. He says, 'I soon received a letter from a gentleman at London, bidding me employ two counsellors and an attorney, and draw upon him for whatever money I wanted. I carried this letter to the postmaster, and asked him if he were willing to let me have money upon

it. He said, " Yes, as much as you please." This was soon noised about the town : so the magistrates were glad to make up the matter. And the work of God so increased that in a little time we had eighty in society.' And that is the way in which Methodism came to Shaftesbury.[1]

When John Wesley arrived at Shaftesbury on July 31 he was hoping to preach ' abroad ' in the evening, ' notwithstanding the threatenings of great and small ' ; but the downpour of rain prevented him. So he went into ' the house,' where he found four or five hundred people assembled. The chief opposers of John Haime were there ; ' but none stirred, none spoke, none smiled. Many were in tears, and many others were filled with joy unspeakable.' The next morning, at five o'clock, the room was nearly full, and once more several of John Haime's bitterest persecutors were present. Mounting their horses, Wesley and his companions rode towards Devon. Having been informed that many at Tiverton desired to hear him, John Wesley went to the town where his brother Samuel was for some years the head master of Blundell's School, and where he died and was buried. On August 3 John Wesley preached in the market-place, and hoped that good would be done. Journeying towards Cornwall, on Sunday, August 5, he preached to a large congregation in Whitefield's Tabernacle in Plymouth, numbers flocking to hear him from all parts. The barriers had been removed by the reconciliation that had been effected between the Wesleys and Whitefield, and the dawn of a better day was spreading in the sky.

John Wesley stayed in Cornwall for a little more than three weeks. He found much to encourage him. His deep content is revealed by the words with which he closes his account of this visit : ' What can destroy the work of God in these parts but zeal for and contending about opinions ? ' The only drawback to the cheerfulness of his descriptions is this remark : ' Through all Cornwall I find the Societies have suffered great loss from want of discipline. Wisely said the ancients, " The soul and body make the man ; the Spirit and discipline make the Christian." ' When we remember the sharp trials through which the Cornish Methodists had passed, and the persecution which had driven the lay preachers out of the county, we do not wonder that the defect which

[1] *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 301–305.

Wesley perceived had arisen; but much can be placed on the other side. Wesley was cheered by the change in the character of the preaching of Mr. Collins, the minister of Redruth. He attended the church, and heard 'an exceedingly useful sermon on the General Judgement.' At St. Just he found that the prosperity of the Society had continued. It was still the largest in Cornwall; and in describing it he says, 'So great a proportion of believers I have not found in all the nation beside.' On August 22 he held a Quarterly Meeting at St. Ives, at which the stewards of all the Cornish Societies were present. We have seen that in former years meetings of the Cornish stewards had been held, but the word 'Quarterly' shows that a new departure had been made, and the Cheshire and Yorkshire plan had been introduced. In connexion with the Quarterly Meeting the first watch-night in Cornwall was held. Wesley preached twice in the church at St. Gennys; and, on Monday, August 27, he was with his friend John Bennett, whom he describes as 'full of days, and by swift steps removing into eternity.' Wesley preached in the churches at Tresmere and Laneast, and said farewell to John Bennett. It was their last meeting. In October his old comrade died.

An incident that occurred during this visit to Cornwall must be specially mentioned. Among the contents of Bishop Lavington's pamphlets there is an accusation against Wesley respecting his conduct with women. Accompanied by John Haime and John Trembath, Wesley went to the house of the woman who was the bishop's authority for the scandals. The result of the interview is given in the *Journal*. Wesley says that the woman, on being questioned, 'readily told me, and that over and over again, that she never saw or knew any harm by me.' He adds, 'Yet I am not sure that she has not said just the contrary to others. If so, she, and not I, must give account for it to God.' It is probable that these reports were brought to the bishop by the men who acted as his 'lion-providers,' and that he used the unsavoury gossip of a garrulous woman without any personal attempt to ascertain the truth of her statements. The report did Wesley much mischief. It travelled into the North of England, and his enemies there made use of it in their attempt to besmirch his character.

[1] *Journal*, iii. 492.

Leaving Cornwall, Wesley reached Shaftesbury on September 3. He preached in the evening to a serious and quiet congregation, and the next morning to 'abundance of people' who had assembled in the 'Room.' On his first visit he was prevented from preaching in the open air by heavy rain, but on September 4 we see him making his way, at noon, to the most riotous part of the town, 'where four ways met.' It seems clear that he took his stand near the spot where John Haime opened his campaign. Preaching from a text he carried from end to end of England, he called upon the wicked 'to forsake his way.' The people listened in silence; 'none made a noise, or spoke one word.' When he returned to his lodging, and was resting a constable made his appearance. He was charged with an important message. 'Sir,' he said, 'the mayor discharges you from preaching in this borough any more.' The constable was rendered speechless by Wesley's calm reply, 'While King George gives me leave to preach, I shall not ask leave of the Mayor of Shaftesbury.' As the constable departs in amazement we begin to wonder as to the precise meaning of Wesley's words. Our thoughts go back to Bernard Gilpin, who was licensed by Edward VI 'as a general preacher throughout the Kingdom, so long as the King lived.'[1] But the probabilities are against such a solution of the problem. We get on sure ground when we remember the conversation in Kew Gardens between George II and the Quaker when the King received information concerning the Wesleys which gave him insight into the character and value of their work. We also recall the fact that, in the presence of his Council, the King had declared that 'no man in his dominions should be persecuted on account of religion while he sat on the throne'; and that when his declaration was made known to the Middlesex magistrates they succeeded in stopping the mobbing of the Methodists in London. In Bristol and Newcastle a knowledge of the King's declaration may have spread, but in the country at large the people were either ignorant of it or ignored it. Mobs still went out with their battle shouts of 'Church and King!' There was an element of absurdity in this war-cry, but its effectiveness is undeniable. When the constable at Shaftesbury had communicated Wesley's message to the mayor, he must

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 73.

have left that official 'deeply pondering.'[1] Wesley got back to London on September 8, and heard the news of the death of John Jane, whom we have met in the course of this history.[2] On an exceeding hot day, after walking from Epworth to Hainton, he was attacked by fever. He found refuge in Alice Shadforth's house. Wesley was told that during his sickness 'he talked of the things of God, and spent much time in prayer.' On Friday, August 24, when he seemed to be recovering, he sat in the evening by the fireside. About six o'clock he fetched a deep sigh, and never spoke more. He lived until the same hour on Saturday. Then, 'without any struggle, or any sign of pain, with a smile on his face, he passed away.' His last words, spoken on the Friday, were, 'I find the love of God in Christ Jesus.' It was a gentle sunset, and its light still lingers in the sky. John Jane lived, like most of his fellow preachers, in habitual poverty. All his clothes, if sold, were not thought to be sufficient to meet his funeral expenses. The money found in his possession amounted to one shilling and four pence. Southey, when recording John Jane's death, rises to an unusual height of eulogy. Speaking of Wesley, he says, 'No founder of a monastic order ever more entirely possessed the respect, as well as the love and the admiration, of his disciples, or better understood their individual characters, and how to deal with each according to the measure of his capacity. Where strength of mind and steadiness were united with warmth of heart, he made the preacher his counsellor as well as his friend; when only simple zeal was to be found, he used it as his instrument as long as it lasted.' Steadiness, and warmth of heart, and simple zeal were combined in John Jane; we do not wonder that Southey, when speaking of John Jane's poverty, was moved to say, 'St. Francis himself might have been satisfied with such a disciple.'[3]

We think it probable that John Wesley, when he arrived in London, found a letter from John Nelson dated August 29, 1750. When he read it he found that his advice was urgently needed on the subject of the legal settlement of the new preaching-house that was being built at Birstall. The Birstall Chapel Case is well known to those who take an interest in the

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 39, 40. [2] See *ante*, 100.
[3] *Life of Wesley*, 303–304, Bohn's ed.

constitutional questions that confronted the Methodists in the early years of their history. When we say that the Birstall Chapel Case was not finally settled until the beginning of the year 1854 we see its special importance. We shall have to deal with it later, and will now confine ourselves to the contents of John Nelson's letter, so far as they concern the building and settlement of the Birstall Chapel. He says:

> The stewards and trustees of the chapel we are building, and which is now slated, desire you to give them advice how the writings must be made, which are to convey the power into the hands of seven men, to be as trustees, and for what use the house and ground are to be employed; and as it is intended for pious use, whether it must not be enrolled in Chancery. They desire you to send a copy of the deeds of some of the houses you have been concerned in, as soon as possible; for all is in the hands of one man, and, if he should die, it would cause great confusion before things could be properly settled.[1]

We do not know Wesley's answer to this letter. He was reluctant to meddle with legal affairs, but he may have sent a copy of the deeds of the Bristol or Newcastle 'Houses.' If he did so he may have created the difficulty that afterwards gave him so much trouble. The two 'Houses' just mentioned were settled on similar trusts. John Wesley had the right of 'nominating or appointing' the men who should preach in the building; and, after his death, that right was to be exercised by Charles Wesley. After the decease of the survivor the right of appointment passed into the possession of the trustees. The major part of them were empowered, 'from time to time, and at all times thereafter, monthly or oftener, at their discretion, to nominate and appoint one or more fit person or persons to preach and expound God's holy word in the said House.'[2] It is well known that after John Wesley's death this arrangement for supplying the 'Houses' with preachers led to most serious disputes in Bristol, and the same question was one of the chief causes of the Birstall controversies.

Charles Wesley met his brother in London on September 13. Four days afterwards he set out on a journey to the North. He got beyond Islington when his mare threw him and fell on him. He managed to get as far as St. Albans, but was then forced to stop. He found shelter there, but

[1] *Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 177.

[2] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 315–317.

he could not sleep day or night. With difficulty he got back to London and reached the Foundery. Then, for three days, he stayed at Newington Green, and received much benefit from rest and fresh air. On October 29 he set out with Mr. Waller for Ludlow and spent more than a month with the Gwynnes. It was not until December 27 that Charles Wesley returned to London. He therefore saw but little of his brother. On February 2, 1751, they met; and he received news that filled him with amazement.

XV

MARRIAGE

In January, 1751, John Wesley received a letter from Dr. Isham, the Rector of Lincoln College. It contained an urgent request that he would come to Oxford and give his vote for Dr. Morley as a candidate for Parliament. Dr. Morley was one of Wesley's old friends, and he at once responded to the appeal.[1] He set out for the University on January 30, reaching the city in the evening. It was an exciting journey. A hard frost had made the roads slippery and dangerous to travel; but he arrived in safety. The next day he went to the schools where Convocation met. He voted for Dr. Morley, whose candidature was not successful. During this visit Wesley was much impressed by the changed attitude of the people toward himself. He was surprised with their civility. There was 'no pointing, no calling of names, not even laughter.' During a contested election voters are sometimes astonished at the respect they inspire in the partisans of rival candidates; but, as we read the entry in the *Journal* we think that Wesley's chief reference is to the improved manners of the people. He uses the phrase 'gentlemen as well as others,' it seems to show that this new civility was not confined to one section of the citizens. As he walks through the crowd, we watch him with some concern. We think we see the springing up of an old desire. The hostility of Oxford had acted as a powerful influence, driving him to his work as a wandering evangelist. We owe much to the 'good haters' of the University. Quite unconsciously, they played a great part in the religious reformation of England. But, although Oxford was hostile to Wesley, he was at this time peculiarly sensitive to the charm of the beautiful city. He dreamed of its towers and spires, and in certain moods the vision that shone before him was almost irresistible. During this visit the spell was working. Christchurch and the cathedral

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 82.

were full of voices. His old room at Lincoln spoke to him of pleasant days and vanished friends. His heart was moved; he longed for sympathetic companionship, and for the return of the days of a restful life.

When Wesley mounts his horse and makes his way to London we experience a sense of relief. How long the comfort will last will depend on the revelation that will be given as the curtain that covers the years slowly rises. We have said that when he left London to visit Wales and Ireland he admits that he did so 'with reluctance,' and we have ventured to suggest that such reluctance may have arisen from the fact that there may have been some special reason for his wish to linger in London. As he hurries over the slippery roads our suspicion is confirmed. We know that he is longing for sympathetic companionship, and that the loneliness of his life oppresses him. Is it possible that the wounds caused by his disappointment in the case of Grace Murray have ceased to smart?

With all carefulness we must now try to describe a critical event in John Wesley's life. At this period he had spent much time in pondering the question of the advisability of marriage. He did not consult his brother; the Grace Murray episode had shaken his confidence in him as a counsellor on this delicate subject. After reflection and correspondence and conversation with Vincent Perronet and Ebenezer Blackwell, he came to the conclusion that he ought to marry. His decision was hastened by a letter from Vincent Perronet which reached him on February 2, immediately after his return from Oxford. His mind became absorbed in the subject. One result of his broodings is evident. His sense of humour lost its keen edge. The day after receiving the letter he preached twice at Hayes, in Middlesex, in the church of his friend Charles Manning. In the morning his text was Gen. i. 27. His sermon must have riveted the attention of the young men and maidens of his congregation. Three days later he met 'the single men' of the Society at the Foundery, and showed them on how many accounts it was good for those who had received the gift from God 'to remain single for the kingdom of heaven's sake.' He took care, however, to add to his exhortation the cautious remark, 'unless where a particular case might be an exception to the general rule.' This caution sounds like

an apology in advance. We do not doubt that the ' rule ' was generously interpreted by each of the ' single men ' in his own interest.

We think that Wesley, in consultation with Vincent Perronet and Ebenezer Blackwell, had received advice which determined his choice of a wife. Vincent Perronet was a descendant of a Huguenot family ; Mr. Blackwell was a banker in the City of London. In Threadneedle Street there was a large colony of Huguenots, some of whom were well-known merchants. The oldest Huguenot church in London stood in the street. Smiles says that it was looked upon as their cathedral. As we watch the crowd of merchants moving about the street, two of them attract our attention. One is Mr. Goldhawk. He bears an Anglicized name, but he is of Huguenot descent. We know little of his domestic affairs ; it is enough to say that he has a daughter named Mary. The other merchant is Anthony Vazeille, also a Huguenot. He has married Mary Goldhawk. It is difficult at the present day to think of Threadneedle Street as a residential neighbourhood, but this merchant has a house there, in which he lives with his wife and children. It is said that he spoils his wife with over-indulgence, constantly letting her have her own way. He has a country house at Wandsworth, and goes there from time to time. In that little town on the Wandle, from about the year 1570, there had been a settlement of foreigners. Smiles tells us that they were a branch of the Flemings who had landed at Sandwich, and had attracted much attention by the excellence of their gardening. In London Flemish vegetables became ' the mode.' But the cost of transit from Sandwich was considerable, and so some of the Flemings determined to commence gardens near London. A few of the refugees made their way to the village of Wandsworth, which then lay engirdled by wide-spreading heaths and commons. Gardens were laid out, and a thriving trade was done. Soon the gardeners were joined by fellow refugees who began various branches of industry, such as the manufacture of felts and the making of brass plates for culinary utensils, which productions ' they kept a mystery.' Smiles also says that one Fromantel introduced the manufacture of pendulum or Dutch clocks, which shortly came into common use. The settlers built a small chapel. When we visited

it, now many years ago, we noted a stone let into the front of the building on which these significant words appeared: 'Erected 1573. Enlarged 1685. Repaired 1809, 1831.' He that hath eyes to see let him read the long and wonderful story written between the lines of that inscription.

The old Huguenot chapel stands near the parish church. It must be remembered that the Church of England, during the time when the persecuted Protestants were streaming in from the Continent, showed them no little kindness. In the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, and in St. Mark's Church on College Green, Bristol, their congregations were permitted to assemble for worship. We do not know anything about the place where Anthony Vazeille and his family worshipped during their stay at their country residence. The following extracts from the registers of the parish church yield a little light: '16 Jan., 1744, Charles, son of Anthony and Mary Vazeille, christened.' '30 Jan., 1744, Charles, infant son of Mr. Vazeille, buried.'[1]

In passing we may say that John Wesley was acquainted with Wandsworth. On Wednesday, November 16, 1748, he visited the little town, and preached there to a small company. His sympathies were stirred as he listened to the story of their 'rough setting-out.' The rabble, gathering from every side whenever the Methodists met for worship, threw dirt and stones at them, and grossly abused both men and women. Complaint was made to a neighbouring magistrate, who promised to do them justice. But the rector walked over to his house, and spoke so much in favour of the rioters that they were all discharged. Wesley thought it strange that 'a mild, humane man' could be persuaded to encourage a merciless rabble in outraging the innocent. He records the fact that a few days after his visit to the magistrate, the rector, walking over a field which he had crossed on his way to the magistrate's house, dropped down and spoke no more. For nearly twenty years the Methodists in Wandsworth endured hardship; but at last there came the breaking of a bright day.

Losing sight of Wandsworth for a time we must return to London. When John Wesley got back to the City on

[1] Mr. Gadsden, a member of the Wesley Historical Society, has laid us under obligation by rescuing from oblivion these pathetic entries concerning a short life. *W.H.S. Proceedings*, ii. 61.

February 2 he saw his brother, and told him he was resolved to marry. He did not mention the name of the intended bride. When the interview was over, and John Wesley had left the house, Edward Perronet rushed in with great news. He startled Charles Wesley by telling him that his brother was going to marry the widow of Mr. Vazeille. He had never suspected such a thing. When Edward Perronet had left, Charles Wesley was overwhelmed with grief. He retired to mourn with his wife. She shared his amazement and sorrow. Describing his trouble, he says, 'I groaned all the day, and several following ones, under my own and the people's burden. I could eat no pleasant food, nor preach, nor rest, either by night or by day.' His reference to his 'own and the people's burden' is somewhat difficult to understand; but it is possible he saw that his friendship with Mrs. Vazeille may have contributed in some degree to the catastrophe that robbed him of his self-control.[1]

On Sunday, February 10, John Wesley preached at the Foundery at five o'clock in the morning. He had arranged to start out on his visitation of the northern Societies the next day. It was time they should be visited. We have seen that Charles Wesley had been prevented from doing this necessary work by sudden illness, so John Wesley had to take his place. He had not been in the North since October, 1749, when the marriage of John Bennet and Grace Murray took place. He seems to have shunned the neighbourhood, but he corresponded with Bennet. Their letters show that the rift between them was widening. William Darney was on John Wesley's mind; he would gladly have handed back to him the Societies he had formed in Yorkshire and elsewhere. It is true that William Grimshaw was caring for the Societies in his neighbourhood, but the presence of the Wesleys was absolutely necessary to the stability and unity of the northern Methodists. And, once more, the people who were expecting a visit were disappointed. They received the news that John Wesley could not come. Let us see what had happened. After preaching at the Foundery on February 10, John Wesley hastened to Snowsfields to take leave of the congregation before commencing his journey to the North. It was a time

[1] Thomas Jackson suggests other reasons for Charles Wesley's great disturbance of mind. They do not seem to be sufficient to account for such an outburst of sorrow See Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, i. 566–568.

of hard frost, and the streets were slippery. He came to London Bridge, hurried along and reached the middle of the bridge. Then suddenly both his feet slipped on the ice, and he fell with great force, the bone of his ankle lighting on the top of a stone. He rose, and with some help managed to reach Snowsfields Chapel, where he preached. He got a surgeon to bind up his leg, managed to walk to West Street, where he preached once more. He ended the day by being carried in a chair from the house of a friend to the Foundery. He intended to preach there; but his accident and his subsequent exertions had so exhausted him that he could not carry out his intention. He was convinced that his northern journey must be postponed.

On Monday, February 11, John Wesley left the Foundery, and removed to Mrs. Vazeille's house in Threadneedle Street, where he spent the remainder of the week. Without invading his privacy, there are a few facts we must note. He improved his enforced rest by continuing his work on the *Short Hebrew Grammar*, which was published in 1751. He also proceeded with the preparation of the Fourth Part of his *Lessons for Children*, the publication of which was delayed until 1754. Mr. Green says that the whole work was prepared with much painstaking and care; and that it forms a really valuable lesson-book for the young. Portions of Scripture, such as children may the more easily understand, and such as it most concerns them to know, are set down in the same order, and generally the same words, as in the Holy Scriptures. But the whole of Wesley's time was not surrendered to the claims of literature. Some of it—we might almost say most of it—was given up to 'conversation.' The topics are not recorded in the *Journal*, but we think that during this stay in Threadneedle Street the wedding-day was fixed, and the necessary arrangements were made. There were other matters that may have been previously discussed but needed a final review. Mrs. Vazeille possessed a fortune of £10,000, and Wesley insisted that her money should be settled on herself and her four children. As his marriage would involve the giving up of his Oxford Fellowship, it will be seen that his pecuniary position was not to be improved. He was well acquainted with poverty, and did not dread it. In the days of his mission to Georgia he hesitated to receive any salary

for his work, and it was only by the persuasion of friends that he yielded. It may be taken for granted that to the end of his life he was never beguiled by the glitter of gold. Another subject was discussed and settled. It concerned Wesley's work and his frequent absences from home. We know that Mrs. Vazeille agreed that his work should be continued on the same lines, and that their marriage should not interfere with it in any particular.

It was John Wesley's intention to begin his postponed visit to the North on Monday, February 18; but he was once more disappointed. His accident still disabled him from taking such a long journey. We turn to his *Journal* to see how he spent the day, but receive no illumination. He tells us that he preached on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning, but on the proceedings of Monday he is silent. If we possess the great gift of 'the inquiring mind,' and are acquainted with the magazines of the time it is possible to appease our curiosity. Turning over the pages of *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1751, we are somewhat startled to find the following entry in its early pages. In a list of marriages this notice occurs: 'Feb. 18. Rev. Mr. John Wesley, Methodist preacher—to a merchant's widow in Threadneedle Street with a jointure of 300L. per annum.' Taking up *The London Magazine* we see that the news of the marriage is confirmed; but the date is altered to February 19. There is no indication of the place of marriage in these notices. Keen-eyed searchers have spent many hours in examining church registers; but up to the present no written record of the marriage has been found. In the absence of printed evidence, we are compelled to listen to the voice of rumour. More than forty years ago the writer lived in the neighbourhood of Wandsworth. A local legend, handed down from remote years, was then strong and was firmly believed. It was to the effect that John Wesley was married to Mrs. Vazeille in Wandsworth Parish Church. The marriage is not entered in the registers of that church, but that fact is not fatal to the tradition. The Rev. Charles H. Kelly, who lived in Wandsworth for many years, believed the local legend concerning the place of marriage to be correct. Emerging into the region of certainties, we may affirm that the bridegroom was forty-eight years of age, Mrs. Vazeille being seven years younger.

Charles Wesley and his wife were staying at the West Street chapel-house during this exciting time. Several days after the marriage they heard the surprising news. On Wednesday, February 27, the bridegroom and the bride came to see them. From Charles Wesley's *Journal* we find that he was glad to see his brother, and 'saluted' his new 'sister.' After that a process of reconciliation occurred. On March 15 he says, 'I called on my sister; kissed and assured her I was perfectly reconciled to her and my brother.' Charles Wesley had been reading Marcus Antoninus, and his studies had subdued his irritation. A few days after his visit he finished the book, having learned from it some useful lessons, particularly not to resent, not to revenge himself, not to let his peace lie at the mercy of every injurious person. Mrs. Charles Wesley, not being under the influence of Marcus Antoninus, was not so easily pacified; but her husband persuaded her at last to visit his sister, and something resembling an armed truce was effected.

On Monday, March 4, John Wesley, 'being tolerably able to ride, though not to walk,' left London. The visit to the North was still postponed, as it had been arranged to hold a Conference in Bristol. The previous evening Charles Wesley had written him a note which contained the words: 'I am not determined when I shall leave London.' It is not difficult to understand this sentence. John Wesley saw its significance; and, in a letter to Mr. Blackwell, he says, 'This is, indeed, deserting me at my utmost need, just when the Philistines are upon me.' However, he got a few days' rest in Bristol, and had time to consider the new situation and to prepare himself for difficulties which seemed to confront him. He was disturbed in mind by rumours concerning some of the lay preachers. It was reported that some of them were 'perverted from the simplicity of the gospel.' He feared that in a few cases, the charge might not be altogether false, and his mind was troubled. But on the Saturday evening, as he watched the preachers assembling, he caught sight of John Nelson, John Haime, Christopher Hopper, and others. On their steadfastness he could rely. When he saw these men, who 'held the truth as it is in Jesus, and did not hold it in unrighteousness,' his courage and confidence revived. The Conference commenced on Monday,

March 11, and lasted for five days. The record of its proceedings in John Wesley's *Journal* is brief. It is enough to note that his fears about the preachers were not confirmed. He says, 'The more we conversed, the more brotherly love increased. The same spirit was found on Tuesday and Wednesday. I expected to have heard many objections to our first doctrines; but none appeared to have any. We seemed to be all of one mind, as well as one heart.' On Friday he mentioned whatever he thought was amiss or wanting in any of the preachers. His rebukes were received in a right spirit, with much love, and serious, earnest attention. He was much encouraged; and he ends his record by saying, 'I trust not one went from the Conference discontented, but rather blessing God for the consolation.'[1]

[1] *Journal* iii. 516–517.

XVI

GATHERING STORMS

On Wednesday, March 27, 1751, John Wesley left London and set out for the North, with John Haime as his travelling companion. The next day, as they were nearing Evesham, Wesley tells us that 'one from thence met us on Broadway Hill.' It is a brief statement; but those who remember his visits to the neighbourhood in his Oxford days will be sure that it means much. It stirs the memories of the brilliant men and women who gathered in the home of the Kirkhams at Stanton, and wandered gaily over the hills of Broadway. We are on 'enchanted ground.' As Wesley suddenly met this old friend the gates of the past opened. He must have pulled bridle and had a talk with him. Then he would go on slowly, having been touched by 'the tender grace' of days that would never come back to him.

In Wesley's tour through the Midlands and the North we are constantly tempted to linger; but we must hasten on our way. It is necessary to confine our attention to incidents in this journey which cast light on the condition of the Methodist Societies at the time and explain events which subsequently happened. On Saturday, March 30, Wesley and his companion reached Birmingham. The progress of the Society there was slow. It still met in the room in Steelhouse Lane. It continued to meet there until 1763, when a bold step was taken, and an old play-house which stood in a dark court off Moor Street was taken.[1] William Hutton, one of the earliest and best historians of Birmingham, sums up in a few words the experiences of the Methodists in the town. He says: 'The artillery of vengeance was pointed at Methodism for thirty years; but, fixed as a rock, it could never be beaten down.' His estimate of John Wesley is well known. He describes him as a man 'whose extensive knowledge and unblemished

[1] See John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 21, *note*; Dent's *Old and New Birmingham*, 103.

manners give us a tolerable picture of apostolic purity, who *believed* as if he were to be saved by faith, and who *laboured* as if he were to be saved by works.' That eulogium was published in March, 1782, when Hutton's *History of Birmingham to the End of the Year* 1780 made its appearance. In our eyes it has the appearance of a final verdict on the character of John Wesley.[1]

On Sunday, March 31, Wesley met the Society and earnestly warned the members 'against idle disputes and vain janglings.' Then the congregation assembled, and he preached on 'If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.' The hearts of many were melted within them. The thought of the liberty with which Christ has made us free deeply affected the preacher and his audience. Wesley himself was much moved, and could not refrain from 'tears of joy.' At one o'clock he was obliged to preach abroad, the room not being able to contain half the congregation. The last time he preached in Birmingham the stones flew on every side. But the scene was changed. Wesley's opinion was: 'If any disturbance were made now the disturber would be in more danger than the preacher.'

For several days Wesley stayed in Staffordshire. We are especially interested in his visits to Wednesbury. He preached there several times, and on April 3 he made an end of visiting the classes. His record disappoints us. He says that the Society had been 'miserably shattered by the sowers of strange doctrines.'[2] From one of his statements we gather that the Predestinarians had been busy at work, and had forgotten that the classes were neutral grounds in which doctrinal contentions must not be waged. There had been no difficulty in observing this admirable rule when the fierce storms of persecution were beating on the Society; but their enemies were becoming at peace with them, and the members had leisure for theological discussions. Calms have their dangers as well as storms. Wesley was perturbed in mind; he uttered his warning, and his counsels had some effect.

Wesley worked among the Societies in Staffordshire, Cheshire,

[1] The title-page of Hutton's *History* bears the date 1781; but Dent shows that the book did not make its appearance until March 22, 1782. See Dent's *Old and New Birmingham*, 182.

[2] When Charles Wesley visited Wednesbury in July he found that the Society had been reduced in number from three hundred to seventy 'weak, lifeless members.' See his *Journal*, ii. 85.

and Lancashire for several days. Then, on April 12, he rode with his companion to Ambleside. The next day they rode over 'more than Welsh mountains' to Whitehaven. In this town he had a Society to his mind. In meeting the classes on two days he observed a remarkable circumstance. He found that without absolute necessity none of the members ever missed meeting their class. Among nearly two hundred and forty persons there was only one exception to this practice. That was an age of golden days. It must have been with reluctance that he said farewell to the Whitehaven people, not only because of his love for them, but also because he was starting on a journey that must have reminded him of one of the most sorrowful pilgrimages of his life. He was going over the mountains and along 'the miserable paths' which led to Hindley Hill.[1] He says nothing about his harsh experiences and gloomy memories; but from his unpublished letters we know that they had not faded from his mind. Leaving Hindley Hill, where he probably met Christopher Hopper, in the early morning of Saturday, April 20, he and his companions 'scaled the snowy mountains.' They rode by 'the once delightful seat' of Lord Derwentwater, who had recently died. It was neglected, desolate, and swiftly running to ruin. The travellers hastened on their way, until in the afternoon, the walls of Newcastle-on-Tyne rose before them. Wesley had not seen them for many months; but they sent a familiar greeting to him. Soon he was resting in one of his most cherished retreats—the Orphan House. He preached twice on the Sunday in the 'House,' as rain prevented an out-of-door service. This is his record: 'The spirit of the people refreshed me much, as it almost always does. I wish all our Societies were like-minded—as loving, simple, and zealous of good works.'

Wesley's rest was short. On Monday, April 22, we see him riding towards the North, and preaching at Morpeth and Alnwick. The next day he was at Berwick-upon-Tweed. On Wednesday, April 24, he for the first time crossed the Border, and rode into Scotland. He was accompanied by Christopher Hopper. Our wonder at Wesley's presence in Scotland is lessened when we remember that his friend Captain Gallatin had left England for a time and was quartered at

[1] See *Ante* 142.

Musselburgh, near Edinburgh. Mrs. Gallatin was with him, and the invitation he had received from them was irresistible. He had no intention to preach in Scotland. He had once thought of doing so; but for various reasons he had determined to leave Scotland to Whitefield. Although the country was strange to him, there were some places in which he was deeply interested. His experience of 'the forty-five' was fresh in his mind. We do not wonder that when they reached the battlefield of Preston Pans the travellers paused. They went over the ground of the fight; they saw Colonel Gardiner's house. Talking with some of the people, Wesley found that they affirmed that the colonel fought on foot after he was dismounted, and refused to take quarter. As he listened to the description this thought arose in Wesley's mind: 'Be it as it may, he is now "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."' Did he also think of Colonel Gardiner's friend and his own friend, Dr. Doddridge? His health was failing. In far-off Lisbon this very year, the angel of death called him away. The friend of Wesley and the biographer of Colonel Gardiner died in Lisbon on October 26, 1751.

Wesley and Hopper left the battlefield, and travelled towards Musselburgh. They arrived there between four and five o'clock. The news of Wesley's coming had brought abundance of people together who were expecting to hear him preach. He could not disappoint them; and so, on Wednesday, April 24, 1751, he preached in a large school his first sermon in Scotland. The next day he rode to Edinburgh and gives in his *Journal* an unflattering description of the city. He considered it one of the dirtiest cities he had ever seen, 'not excepting Cologne.' The editor of his *Journal* softens this blow by reminding us that Wesley's verdict relates to the 'old town'; the 'new town' was not then projected. Returning to Musselburgh to dinner, in the afternoon Wesley found himself in a little party of gentlemen from Edinburgh. Those of us 'who hail from beyond the Tweed' will find some consolation in his description of the pleasant time he spent with the circle of Scotsmen that afternoon. He says, 'I know not why any should complain of the shyness of the Scots toward strangers. All I spoke with were as free and open with me as the people of Newcastle or Bristol; nor did

any person move any dispute of any kind, or ask me any questions concerning my opinion.'

Wesley preached again in the evening from that text to which thousands had listened in England: 'Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found.' He used great plainness of speech, and 'all received it in love.' He was astonished; and 'the prejudice which the devil had been several years planting was torn up by the roots in one hour.' After the service, one of the bailies of the town, with one of the elders of the Kirk, came to him, and begged him to stay with them a while, if it were but two or three days. They promised to fit up a far larger place than the school, and prepare seats for the congregation. But Wesley's travelling arrangements were fixed; otherwise he would have gladly complied. All he could do was to promise that Christopher Hopper should come back the next week and spend a few days with them. The promise was kept. Hopper returned to Musselburgh. He preached night and morning to large congregations, who heard with great attention. He says, 'This was the beginning of a good work in Scotland.'[1]

On Monday, May 6, John Wesley left Newcastle and commenced his journey to the South. On his way he spent some time at Epworth. In his *Journal* for Saturday, May 11, he makes an entry which brings to light a danger which was causing him and his brother considerable concern at this time. He was told that some of the preachers there had diligently gleaned up and retailed all the evil they could hear of him; that some of them had quite laid aside the Methodist hymns, as well as the doctrine they formerly preached; and that one of them had frequently spoken against 'the rules,' and the others quite neglected them. John Wesley was very slow to accept charges against his preachers; he was their best defender; but it is evident he was compelled to admit that at Epworth mischief had been done by some of them which had seriously affected the people. He expresses the opinion that 'nothing but the mighty power of God could have kept the people so well as they were.' In addition to these doleful tidings, Wesley's heart was pained by listening to the account of the death of his father's old curate, John Romley. It was a pitiful story. Towards the

[1] See *Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 205–206.

end of his life he lost his reason, and it was necessary to put him in confinement. Now and then he had a lucid interval. 'Then,' says Wesley, 'by a judgement mixed with mercy, God took him to Himself.'[1]

On Tuesday, May 14, John Wesley preached 'within the walls of the new house' at Leeds. When the building was completed it became famous.[2] The next day he held 'a little Conference,' the first in Leeds. About thirty preachers were present. We have no details of the business transacted; but, from a sentence contained in John Wesley's *Journal*, we judge that the news he had received at Epworth concerning the conduct of some of the preachers determined the character of part of its proceedings. In this Conference he particularly inquired concerning the 'grace and gifts and fruit' of each of the preachers. He found reason to doubt of one only. We may be sure that the examination was searching; but, in the absence of a list showing the names of those who were present, we have no opportunity of banishing our suspicions concerning the men who had been mentioned to Wesley at Epworth.

On Friday, May 17, John Wesley preached in the 'new house' at Birstall. It was already too small for even a week-day's congregation. He would, doubtless, have a conversation with John Nelson concerning the legal settlement of the building; he must have been disappointed when he was told that no deed had been drawn up and signed. The date of the original deed is December 3, 1751; that fact provokes much thought in the minds of those who have studied the question of the settlement of Methodist chapels in the early days of our history. Having made his entry in his *Journal* concerning preaching in the new house at Birstall, Wesley says, 'After a few days more, spent among the neighbouring Societies, I returned by easy journeys to London.' His tour had occupied about two months.

During Wesley's absence from London our thoughts have often turned to Mrs. Wesley. She had consented to the separations which were made imperative by the conditions of his itinerant life. We do not know if he is quoting from one of their conversations when he enters in his *Journal*

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 77, 97, 199, 290.

[2] The 'Old Boggard House' was succeeded by St. Peter's Chapel. See *Journal*, ii. 526 *note*.

the heroic words, 'I cannot understand how a Methodist preacher can answer it to God to preach one sermon or travel one day less in a married than in a single state. In this respect surely "it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they had none."' The austerity of that declaration cannot be denied. It is said that Mrs. Wesley possessed considerable business ability, and had to attend to matters concerning her own estate that needed her presence in London. In a footnote in the *Journal* will be found an affectionate letter from her husband, written to her when he reached Tetsworth at the end of his first day's journey. She desired to make her will, and Wesley tells her that, if the desire continued, Mr. Briggs could write it for her. He also says that if she apprehended any difficulty, Mr. I'Anson would rejoice to advise her. We get further light from letters written by Wesley to his friend Ebenezer Blackwell. On April 7 he says that Mr. Lloyd thought it absolutely needful that a friend or two of Mrs. Wesley should meet Mr. Blisson and a friend or two of his, in order to persuade him to come to an account as to what remains in his hands. He asks Mr. Blackwell and Mr. Lloyd to take the trouble on themselves. On May 14 he writes as if an amicable conclusion might be reached, and expresses his obligation to Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell on his own and his wife's behalf. He says that if 'these outward incumbrances were removed' it might be the means of giving Mrs. Wesley the opportunity of spending more time with him; 'which would probably be useful as well as agreeable to her.'[1] In addition to this detention in London, we gather a further fact from Charles Wesley's *Journal*. We find that Mrs. Wesley did not spend all her time in London. On May 10 he and his wife came safe to Charles Street, Bristol, and two days afterwards he met Mrs. John Wesley at the Horse-fair, and 'behaved as a brother to her.' They met again on May 14, when he showed her, 'both at his own house, and the houses of his friends, all the civility in his power.'[2]

It is necessary that we should fix our attention for a few moments on Charles Wesley. We find that on May 28 Lady Huntingdon was staying in Bristol. Mrs. Jones, of Fonmon, called at Charles Street, and told him her ladyship would be

[1] See Wesley's *Works*, xii. 159, 160, 8vo ed.
[2] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 80–81.

very glad to see him. The friendly relations between Lady Huntingdon and the Wesleys had been weakened; but when Charles Wesley called upon her on June 1 she showed him so much kindness that he forgot all the past. On the Monday Mrs. Charles Wesley accompanied her husband to the house where Lady Huntingdon was staying. They had a long talk together, and the visit was returned the next day. Lady Huntingdon, bringing her daughters with her, came to Charles Street, and spent two hours with Charles Wesley and his wife. They were evidently charmed with Mrs. Charles Wesley, and we know they became her firm friends.

Charles Wesley's next experience casts a shadow over the brightness of his pleasant reunion with an old friend. On June 11 he received a letter from Bradford-on-Avon which caused him much concern. He was asked to bring one of the preachers, James Wheatley, with him to Bradford to answer serious charges. Charles Wesley went to Bradford, and spent two days in interviewing persons and gathering evidence concerning Wheatley's conduct. It will be enough to say that Wheatley considered himself an authority on women's cases, and it was alleged that in examining and prescribing for them he had been guilty of improprieties. When Charles Wesley returned to Bristol he saw Wheatley at Charles Street, and 'set before him, in tender love and pity, the things which he had done.' At first the accused man was stubborn and hard; then he relented, and seemed willing to confess; being satisfied of Charles Wesley's good will.[1]

It must have been a relief to Charles Wesley when his brother arrived on Wednesday, June 19. He was accompanied by his wife. In Charles Wesley's home the brothers had an important conversation. They had drifted apart; but it was impossible for John Wesley to resist Charles Wesley's offer to join him again, 'heartily and entirely.' This pact being made, Wheatley's case was considered. The next day Charles Wesley got Wheatley to his house once more, 'and talked with him as he was able to bear.' On June 25, in company with his brother and the accused man, he went to Bearfield, where Wheatley was confronted with two persons who 'proved their charge to his face.' He pleaded guilty; yet sought to justify himself. Charles Wesley walked with him

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 82–83.

apart. He then threatened to expose all the preachers, and brought a serious charge against one of them whom he would not name. After consulting John Wesley, a resolution was drawn up forbidding Wheatley to preach. He absolutely refused to submit. Charles Wesley says, 'We reasoned with him in vain. He insisted on preaching occasionally in our Societies.' Then John and Charles Wesley signed a document which contained among other sentences, the following words: 'We can in no wise receive you as a fellow labourer till we see clear proofs of your real and deep repentance. . . . The least and lowest proof of such repentance which we can receive is this, That till our next Conference (which we hope will be in October) you abstain both from preaching and practising physic. If you do not, we are clear; we cannot answer for the consequence.'[1]

It was impossible that Wheatley's charge against the preachers could be ignored. On June 27 the Wesleys talked again with him, but 'prevailed nothing.' He was resolved to preach in the Societies. Then they asked him to tell them the name of the preacher whom he knew to be 'a gross sinner.' He refused to do so. On the next day he was confronted by ten of the preachers in the presence of the Wesleys. Thomas Maxfield first, and then each of the others, asked him, 'What sin can you charge me with?' He was silent in every case; and the Wesleys were convinced that his serious charge could not be sustained. We have given these particulars of James Wheatley's case because we shall meet with him again, and it is well that we should keep these facts in mind. In addition, his case had a result which endures to the present day. The Wesleys resolved that in future they would strictly examine into the life and moral behaviour of every preacher in connexion with them. They determined that they would not wait until the Conference assembled in October; the work should be begun at once. Charles Wesley had arranged for a journey to the North, and to him fell the office of making the necessary inquiries.

We have said that John Wesley's arrival in Bristol must have brought relief to his brother. But the pleasure was alloyed. On June 21 he had an interview with Mrs. John Wesley, and found her in tears. He professed his love, pity,

[1] See Myles' *Chronological History of the Methodists*, 71–72, 4th ed.

and desire to help her. She was full of complaints against her husband. Charles Wesley took her to his house, where she resumed the subject after supper, and then went away comforted. The next day he passed another hour with her in free, affectionate conference. Then he saw his brother, and conversed with him; afterwards he talked with both together. He does not mention the subjects of complaint, but consoles us by saying, 'Our explanation ended in prayer and perfect peace.' This cloud trailed along the sky, and disappeared.[1]

When John Wesley built Kingswood School he thought it would become a place in which he might occasionally rest and renew his strength. On June 21 he drew up 'a short account' of the school. It had been opened for three years, and had never answered its purpose. Wesley had faced the difficulties and would not be diverted from his original purpose. At the outset, in 1748, there had been twenty-eight scholars and six masters in the school. In 1751 there were two masters and eleven scholars. He was possessed of an ever-victorious faith, so we watch him with confidence. He faced the danger that threatened the school, believed that success would come, refused to despair, and conquered. John Wesley's *Journal* at this stage gives us but slight assistance in our attempt to follow his course. The records are brief, and their continuity in point of dates is broken. The editor of his *Journal* earns our gratitude by inserting occasional notes when the way seems barren; and other books come to our aid. If it had not been for such assistance we should have been compelled to travel by twilight.

We are much interested in Charles Wesley's 'tour of inspection.' His principal business during his journey to the North was to preach and to consider the state of the Societies. Preaching was his old work, in which his success had been conspicuous. Now, according to the arrangement he had made with his brother, he had to gather information concerning the life and moral behaviour of the preachers in connexion with them. It was a task requiring sympathy, delicacy, and skill. We know that he was dissatisfied with several of the preachers because of their lack of intellectual fitness for their work; but their character was to be his chief concern. In Dr. Whitehead's *Life of John Wesley* we have much-needed

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 83.

light on the results of Charles Wesley's inquiries.[1] He found, in respect of character and moral conduct, only one or two of the lay preachers 'who did not walk worthy of the gospel.' The report on the main subject of inquiry may be deemed satisfactory. But it was inevitable that, in pursuing his inquiries, he would hear some things which he thought his brother ought to know. John Wesley was in constant correspondence with him, and from his letters we can judge the character of Charles Wesley's communications. He reported that, in his opinion, several of the lay preachers were utterly unqualified to preach. On July 17 John Wesley mentions, under their initials, two men of whom he had heard that they frequently and bitterly railed against the Church. This was a report that touched Charles Wesley at a tender spot. We do not wonder that, in his reply to his brother's letter, he asks, 'What assurance can we have that they will not forsake it, at least when we are dead? Ought we to admit any man for a preacher till we can trust his invariable attachment to the Church?' John Wesley's answer to this query is not recorded by Dr. Whitehead.

The question of the maintenance of the preachers emerged in the course of Charles Wesley's inquiries. On July 20 John Wesley writes, 'The Societies both must and shall maintain the preachers we send among them, or I will preach among them no more. The least I can say to any of these preachers is, "give yourself wholly to the work, and you shall have food to eat, and raiment to put on." And I cannot see that any preacher is called to any people who will not thus maintain him.—Almost everything depends on you and me: let nothing damp or hinder us: only let us be alive, and put forth all our strength.' On July 24 John Wesley wrote again to his brother as follows: 'As to the preachers, my counsel is, not to check the young ones without strong necessity. If we lay some aside, we must have a supply; and of the two I prefer grace before gifts.' To this Charles Wesley replied: 'Are not both indispensably necessary? Has not the cause suffered, in Ireland especially, through the insufficiency of the preachers? Should we not first regulate, reform, and bring into discipline the preachers we have, before we look for more? Should

[1] Dr. Whitehead's attitude towards the lay preachers is well known to advanced students of Methodist history. It must always be remembered when he ventures to express a personal opinion on matters in which they are concerned.

we not also watch and labour, to prevent the mischief which the discarded preachers may occasion? '

On July 27 John Wesley, who dreaded the effects of idleness, begged his brother to inquire of each preacher, ' How do you spend your time from morning to evening? ' After hearing the answer he suggested that Charles Wesley should give him this choice ' Either follow your trade, or resolve before God to spend the same hours in reading, &c., which you used to spend in working.' A little later he wrote, ' If our preachers do not, nor will not, spend all their time in study and saving souls, they must be employed close in other work, or perish.' This important correspondence ended on August 24, when John Wesley, writing to his brother, said, ' O that you and I may arise and stand upright! I quite agree with you: let us have but six so we are all one. I have sent one more home to his work. We may trust God to send forth more labourers; only be not unwilling to receive them when there is reasonable proof that He has sent them.'[1]

In order to bring the facts concerning this tour of inspection into one view it is necessary to say that when John and Charles Wesley talked the matter over together they found they were not in agreement as to the remedies that should be applied to correct the weaknesses in administration that had been revealed. At last, in November, they agreed to lay the case before Vincent Perronet, and take his opinion on points in dispute. They went down to Shoreham and consulted him. About six weeks afterwards they went to Shoreham again, when the following *Articles of Agreement* were signed by the two brothers, John Wesley adding his signature with reluctance:

With regard to the Preachers, we agree,

1. That none shall be permitted to preach in any of our societies, till he be examined, both as to his grace and gifts; at least, by the Assistant, who sending word to us may by our answer admit him a local Preacher.

2. That such Preacher be not immediately taken from his trade, but be exhorted to follow it with all diligence.

3. That no person shall be received as a Travelling Preacher, or be taken from his trade, by either of us alone, but by both of us conjointly, giving him a note under both our hands.

4. That neither of us will re-admit a Travelling Preacher laid aside, without the consent of the other.

[1] Whitehead's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 266–268.

5. That if we should ever disagree in our judgement, we will refer the matter to Mr. Perronet.

6. That we will entirely be patterns of all we expect from every Preacher; particularly of zeal, diligence, and punctuality in the work: by constantly preaching and meeting the society; by visiting yearly Ireland, Cornwall, and the North; and in general by superintending the whole work, and every branch of it, with all the strength which God shall give us. We agree to the above written, till this day next year, in the presence of Mr. Perronet.[1]

The good points in this agreement will be seen at once; as will the wisdom of the limitation clause. When we remember that Charles Wesley was gradually retiring from the itinerant work, the picture of him as a 'General Superintendent' raises conflicting thoughts. Soon the whole burden of responsibility would rest on the shoulders of his brother. John Wesley saw that fact clearly, and we do not wonder that he signed the agreement with reluctance.

On Sunday, August 7, we catch sight of Thomas Mitchell, whose 'talents for the ministry were but small.' Charles Atmore says, 'He was a very plain, honest, pious man.' He spent nearly forty years in the ministry. 'The Lord was with him, and proved to the comfort and salvation of many that *He had sent* him. He was born in the parish of Bingley, a town now well known as 'The Throstle-nest of England.'[2] When he was twenty years old he enlisted for a soldier at the time when the landing of the Young Pretender filled the country with terror. In 1746, when the scare was over, he obtained his discharge. Hearing William Grimshaw preach, his eyes were opened to the need of salvation, and he learned that it was to be obtained by faith. He sought the Saviour and found Him. Then he was filled with a passion for the salvation of others, and rejoiced with the exceeding joy of the man who leads sinners to Christ. Grimshaw encouraged him to preach. Speaking to him, and to Paul Greenwood, a preacher who is described by Atmore as 'a man of great simplicity and uprightness of heart,' Grimshaw one day said, 'If you are sent of God to preach His gospel, all hell will be up in arms against you. Prepare for the battle, and stand fast in the good ways of God.' The prophecy was fulfilled. On August 7 Thomas Mitchell was at

[1] Whitehead's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 269–270.

[2] See Mr. Halliwell Sutcliffe's *By Moor and Fell in West Yorkshire*, 97.

Wrangle, in Lincolnshire. Under the direction of a clergyman the mob rose and an assault was made which occupies a conspicuous place in Methodist history. The clergyman stayed in his house, but messengers kept him acquainted with the progress of the fight, and received his instructions. The story can be read in the *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*[1]. Even to this hour it is impossible to read it without indignation. Mitchell and five more Methodists were flung into a pool of standing water. When Mitchell tried to get out he was pitched in again. The water was up to his neck. He was ordered to go through the pool seven times. He did so; and then he was allowed to come out. After a time the mob came and carried him to a great pond, ten or twelve feet deep, railed in on every side. Four men seized him by his legs and arms, swung him two or three times, and then threw him as far as they could into the water. He lost his senses, and felt nothing more. He says, 'But some of them were not willing to have me drowned. So they watched till I came above water; and then, catching hold of my clothes, with a long pole, made shift to drag me out.'

Mitchell lay senseless for some time. The mob left him. When he became conscious he found that two men were standing by him. One of them, having compassion on him, helped him to his feet, and then led him to a little house, where he was quickly put to bed. But the mob came to the house, pulled him out of bed, carried him into the street, and 'swore they would take away one of his limbs' if he would not promise that he would never come to Wrangle again. He told them he could promise no such thing. But the man who had shown him kindness, holding him fast, promised for him; and the mob for a time dispersed. His friend took him back again into the house and once more put him to bed. We have no record of the name of this man; we will number him among the 'Good Samaritans' who pity the sufferings of the helpless when priests pass by on the other side.

Some members of the mob went to the clergyman once more to ask him what they must do with their victim. He told them they must take him out of the parish. Obedient

[1] *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 248–250. The Vicar of Wrangle, in 1751, was the Rev. Richard Baily, who died in 1776. *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv. 178.

to his direction, they went to the house and took him out of his bed a second time. His clothes were wet, and had been covered with paint in the course of the assault. But an old coat was found, put on him, and the mob marched him out of the parish. Then they set him on a little hill; and, after shouting three times, 'God save the King, and the devil take the preachers,' they left him. He was penniless and friendless; his strength was nearly gone; he had much ado to walk, or even to stand. 'But,' says he, 'from the beginning to the end my mind was in perfect peace. I found no anger or resentment, but could heartily pray for my persecutors. But I knew not what to do, or where to go.' Then he remembered that some of 'our friends' lived three or four miles off. He was weak and ill; but, putting his trust in God, he set out. At length he got to the house and received a Methodist welcome. He rested four days with his friends, and his strength was 'tolerably restored.' Then he went out again to face furious mobs. It was reward enough to be able to record that in this time of persecution he had brought many to the saving knowledge of Christ. Atmore says that Thomas Mitchell's talents for the ministry were small, but the Lord was with him. This was proved by the great success of his preaching. Looking into those far-away times he seems to us one of the heroes of the army of God.

On August 15 John Wesley, having received an account of the Wrangle riots from some persons who had come up to London from Lincolnshire, wrote a letter to Mr. Baily. From it we learn that an appeal against the conduct of the mob had been made by the local Methodists to a Justice of the Peace. He would give them no redress. Instead of affording them protection he informed the applicants that the treatment they had received was 'good enough for them,' and if they went on in the same way 'the mob should use them so again.' Wesley's letter made no impression on the vicar; but the threat of an appeal to the Court of King's Bench worked wonders. When Wesley visited Lincolnshire the next year he preached at Wrangle. He expected some disturbance, but found none. He gives this explanation: 'The light punishment inflicted on the late rioters (though their expense was not great, as they submitted before the trial) had secured peace ever since. Such a mercy it is to

execute the penalty of the law on those who will not regard its precepts! So many inconveniences to the innocent does it prevent, and so much sin in the guilty.'[1] The Wrangle riots evidently produced a significant change in the sentiments of Wesley concerning appeals to courts of law.

William Myles, in his *Chronological History*, says that it was in 1751 that 'disputes began in the Connexion respecting our union with the Church of England.' He suggests the following causes of these disputes: '1. Many dissenters had been converted to God by the preaching of the Methodists. They joined the Society, and some of them were made leaders, and also became preachers. These, though men of real piety, retained something of their old prejudices against National Church establishments. 2. Some who were originally Church-people changed their sentiments on account of the illiberal treatment they met with from some of the clergy of the Established Church, and also from the want of piety among the people. 3. Some of the preachers also were rather intemperate in their zeal in pointing out the crimes of wicked ministers.'[2] When we remember the array of clerical mob-leaders, and their fierce assaults on the Methodist people, we readily admit the remarkable restraint displayed by Myles when he wrote the foregoing sentences. But as a revelation of the state of feeling in the Methodist Societies in 1751 they possess considerable value.

On August 17 John Wesley was in London. He called on Ebenezer Blackwell in the city, whom he had not seen for a long time. The banker was looking thin and pale. Wesley, who strongly believed in the good effects of fresh air and exercise, told him that he was setting out for Cornwall with Mrs. Wesley on the Monday, and asked him to accompany them. He did so, and received great benefit from his tour. He was obliged to get back to business, and left them before they returned. We mention the fact chiefly because this journey marks the first occasion on which Mrs. Wesley accompanied her husband on his travels among the country Societies. It was not until October 21 that they got back to London.

In closing our records of this crowded year it is essential that we should relate an incident which occurred on December 30, as it subsequently produced decisive effects on the relations

[1] *Journal*, iv. 20. [2] *Chronological History*, 72.

then existing between John Wesley and John Bennet. On that day we find that Thomas Mitchell was in Bolton. He had been among the Lancashire Societies, and had been much troubled by finding them in a disturbed condition. He says, 'The poor people were in the utmost confusion, like a flock of frightened sheep.' The breach between John Wesley and Bennet had become wider; and we must admit that Bennet's work among the Societies had been injurious to Wesley's influence. When Mitchell reached the Acresfield Room he found Bennet there, and desired him to preach; but he declined. There have been several versions of what happened when the preaching service was over; so it will be best to quote Mitchell's exact words. At the close of the service Bennet met the Society, 'and said many bitter things of Mr. Wesley. He then spread out his hands, and cried, "Popery! Popery! I will not be in connexion with him any more." I could not help telling him, "The spirit in which you now speak is not of God. Neither are you fit for the pulpit while you are of such a spirit." While I was speaking, a woman that stood by me struck me in the face with all her might. Immediately all the congregation was in an uproar; so I thought it best to retire. Afterward I believed it was my duty to expostulate with him; but it did not avail. It seemed to me that all love was departed from him. His mind was wholly set against Mr. Wesley, and against the whole Methodist doctrine and discipline; and he had infused his own spirit into the people in many places; so I had hard work among them.'[1] Some weeks elapsed before John Wesley heard of this unfortunate scene. We must reserve comments on it until our next chapter.

[1] *Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 250–251.

XVII

JOHN BENNET

THERE is a gap in John Wesley's *Journal* between the dates December 22, 1751, and March 14, 1752; but the editor of the latest edition has rescued from oblivion a few facts that will help us. At this point we will refer to one of them. On January 29, 1752, an important agreement was made between the Wesleys and some of the lay preachers. The document was written by John Wesley, and it was signed by him, Charles Wesley, John Trembath, Edward Perronet, Jonathan Reeves, Joseph Cownley, Charles Perronet, Thomas Maxfield, John Downes, John Jones, John Nelson, William Shent, and John Haime. When we recall the circumstances of the time we shall recognize its importance. Those who signed the document agreed as follows:

1. That we will not listen, or willingly inquire after, any Ill concerning each other.
2. That if we do hear any Ill of each other, we will not be forward to believe it.
3. That as soon as possible we will communicate what we hear, by speaking or writing to the Person concerned.
4. That till we have done this, we will not write or speak a Syllable of it to any other Person whatsoever.
5. That neither will we mention it, after we have done this, to any other Person.
6. That we will not make any exception to any of these Rules, unless we think ourselves obliged in Conscience so to do.[1]

On Sunday March 15, 1752, John Wesley preached at West Street Chapel in the afternoon. A great storm was blowing. He says that it was one of the most violent he remembered. He had got to 'the midst of the sermon' when 'a huge noise' was heard. The people were startled, but retained their self-possession. They found out afterwards that a great part of a

[1] See facsimile of the *Agreement*, *Journal*, iv. 9.

house opposite the chapel had been blown down. A little later, while the tiles were rattling down from the houses on both sides, Wesley mounted his horse, ready for a journey. We confess to some surprise when we see that Mrs. Wesley and her daughter Jane are also mounted, and set out with him through the gale. At that time Jenny Vazeille was a girl of about fifteen years of age. When we think of the steadfastness of the congregation, and the courage of Jenny and her mother, we form a high opinion of the condition of 'nerves' in the eighteenth century.

Let us try to catch sight of the riders on their way. On Tuesday they set out from Enstone, in Oxfordshire, where the rain ceased. It had been pouring down on them without intermission. They were going to Evesham. When they got to Broadway Hill a strong wind was blowing; it often 'drove them clear out of the path, and was ready to carry away both horse and rider.' But they fought their way through; and, before six in the evening, reached Evesham unhurt. Wesley closed this tempestuous day by preaching at the Town Hall, where several of the clergy and gentry were present. Among the clergy we see Wesley's old friend Robert Kirkham, the successor of his father Lionel Kirkham in the family living of Stanton.

We presume that Mrs. Wesley and her daughter rested on the next day; but John Wesley, with his friend, rode over to Stanton. Wesley had not seen the village for upwards of twenty years. The old friends had departed; 'most of them were gone to their long home.' But he met his friend's aunt. After greeting him, says Wesley, 'she could not long forbear telling me how sorry she was that I should leave all my friends to lead this vagabond life.' He adds words which lift the veil covering his deepest thoughts. 'Why, indeed, it is not pleasing to flesh and blood; and I would not do it if I did not believe there was another world.' The dispute did not continue long, and ended 'in much love.' Kirkham rode back to Evesham with Wesley; he attended the preaching that evening and the next morning at five o'clock. Then the two men prepared to part. It was some time before Wesley's old friend could speak. Then he solemnly said, 'I am to take care of two thousand souls, and I never yet knew how to take care of my own!' Wesley counselled and comforted

him ; and he turned away ' full of conviction and good resolutions.'[1]

On Thursday, March 27, the day before Good Friday, John Wesley, with his wife and daughter, reached Manchester. The next day he attended the ' Old Church.' His friend of other days, John Clayton, read prayers ; but Wesley says nothing of any private interview with him. We do not suppose that they spoke to each other, for Clayton had turned his back on the Wesley brothers. During his journeys in Cheshire and Lancashire Wesley heard reports that grieved him. They related to John Bennet, and we must now turn to a subject that we approach with great regret. Passing by the gossip that reached the ears of Wesley, we find that, on March 31, 1752, Thomas Mitchell gave him a full account of the events we have already recorded as having taken place on December 30, 1751. Wesley must have been surprised by Bennet's statement, ' I have not been in connexion with him these three years, neither will I be any more.' His surprise would be heightened when Mitchell told him that Bennet had said the same thing ' to all the stewards at the Quarterly Meeting on New Year's Day.' So late as September, 1751, Bennet had attended the conference of the preachers in Leeds, convened by Charles Wesley ; and there can be no doubt that at the time when he made his statement concerning his relation to John Wesley he was thought to be a preacher still in ' connexion ' with him.

April 1 and 2, 1752, were exceptionally important days in John Wesley's career ; but he makes no record of their events in his *Journal.* But we are not without guidance. John Bennet's MS. *Journal,* which has helped us before, must help us again. In it we have a full account of the proceedings that have made these dates memorable. It would have assisted us if we had been able to add Wesley's explanations of matters still somewhat obscure ; but we must avail ourselves of the materials at hand, instead of longing for those out of our reach.

On March 31 John Bennet and his wife went to Manchester. We notice them in the congregation gathered to hear John Wesley. He must have been surprised to see Mrs. Bennet once more.[2] The next morning she was at the five o'clock

[1] *Journal,* iv. 12–13.

[2] A pathetic story has been told concerning John Wesley and Mrs. Bennet. It is to the effect that after the interview immediately following her marriage they never met again until they were in extreme old age. That story needs to be revised.

service with her husband. After that service they went to Bolton, where Wesley was to preach in the evening. Before the service began John Bennet called Wesley into a room in the preaching-house, and had a conversation with him. Bennet gave him an account of 'the distraction and uneasiness' which existed in the Bolton Society in consequence of the legal settlement of the 'Room.' Wesley must have listened with no little wonder to the description of that settlement, and would get some light upon Bennet's outcry against 'Popery.' It appears that John Bennet and some of the members of the Society in Bolton believed that the 'Room' had been 'made over or given' by the trustees to John and Charles Wesley, and that they had enrolled the deed of transfer in Chancery. Further, that the deed contained a clause securing the exclusive use of the 'Room' to men who preached the doctrines of the Wesleys. Having imparted this astounding news to Wesley, Bennet proceeded to give him advice on the best way to allay the 'distraction and uneasiness' which undoubtedly existed. He counselled Wesley to return their money to 'the poor people' who had contributed to the fund for the erection of the 'Room,' and suggested that, having done this, the Wesleys might take the 'House' as their own possession. Wesley was reduced to a state of silent astonishment by Bennet's description of the contents of the deed. The silence was broken by Bennet, who told him that the opinion of a lawyer had been taken on the case, and he had informed the people who had consulted him that they might recover the 'House' if they prosecuted Wesley and the trustees 'for giving away what was not their own.' This suggestion roused Wesley; according to Bennet, 'in a passion' he said, in effect, that he would spend £500 in defending himself against such an action. Seeing that it would exasperate Wesley still more if he continued to give him further advice, Bennet dropped the subject, and it was agreed that a trustees' meeting should be held after the service. They were turning to other matters when, suddenly, Mrs. Wesley walked into the room 'in a great rage.' She declared that there should be 'no private meetings or underhand dealings' on the premises. It is well known that, although she was said to be a woman of 'a sorrowful spirit,' she possessed an unusual amount of natural pugnacity; at her command the room was cleared. As Bennet left she

expressed the opinion that he was in 'the gall of bitterness,' and was 'a very bad man.'

After this interview Wesley preached in the 'Room' on one of his great texts, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Bennet listened in a critical spirit, and came to the conclusion that Wesley taught a doctrine concerning 'imputed righteousness' which was contrary to his previous teaching, and which it was impossible that he could accept. In his *Journal* there are copious notes on this subject, which it is not necessary to reproduce. After the service the trustees met in Wesley's room. Mrs. Wesley was present. According to Bennet, the greater part of the trustees insisted on the return of their money, as Wesley had 'secured the "House" to himself.' In this meeting Bennet also raised a discussion concerning Wesley's doctrinal unsoundness. The discussion was conducted with considerable warmth, and ended abruptly.

On April 2 Wesley preached three times in the Bolton 'Room.' After the noon service he desired the Society to stop. In their presence he defended himself against the charges brought against him. Bennet asked permission to speak, and it was granted. At this point the proceedings become interesting; for the first time we begin to get light on the contents of the Bolton deed. Escaping from 'hearsays,' we approach a region of facts. In reading Bennet's description of this meeting we are confirmed in the conviction that he and Wesley had never seen the deed of the Bolton 'House.' In the course of the discussion the name of Mr. Thornton, a London solicitor, was mentioned. Commenting, in his *Journal*, on Wesley's ignorance of the contents of the deed, Bennet says, 'This seemed strange to me, that Mr. Thornton, the lawyer, should come and settle an estate upon him and he not know it. Besides, Mr. Thornton settled several other houses in the same manner before this on Mr. Wesley.' These words put a thread into our hand that will guide us through the labyrinth.

Many years ago, when the writer was familiar with 'the dusty purlieus of the law,' a shrewd solicitor advised him never to give an opinion on a case without seeing documents. Much of the mischief done in Bolton would have been prevented if the deed of settlement had been produced, and if its terms

had been explained by a competent lawyer. In the absence of the original deed we must proceed on the supposition that Bennet's reference to the 'Houses' that had been settled by Mr. Thornton 'in the same manner' as the Bolton 'Room' looks in the direction of the 'Houses' at Bristol and Newcastle-on-Tyne. The deeds of settlement of the two 'Houses' are still in existence, and we have carefully examined them. The Bristol deed, prepared by Mr. Thornton, is in the custody of the Rev. Dr. Sharp, at the Wesleyan Conference Office, and a copy of the Newcastle deed is contained in Dr. W. W. Stamp's book on *The Orphan House of Wesley*. Both deeds are drawn up on similiar lines.[1] If the issue of the Bolton discussions had not been so serious we should be amused at Bennet's extraordinary statements. He knew a little magistrates' law, but that knowledge is of slight use in a case in which a difficult question of property law is concerned. We have shown that John Wesley was most anxious to get rid of the burden of personal possession of his preaching-houses, and that he employed Mr. Thornton to devise a plan that would effect his release. In the case of Bristol and Newcastle the houses were conveyed to trustees on the terms mentioned in the deeds; but the right of nominating the preachers to the buildings was reserved to John and Charles Wesley. At the death of the survivor of the two brothers that right passed into the hands of the trustees. We do not wonder that John Wesley sat silent when Bennet assured him that, by secret means, he had obtained by Mr. Thornton's aid the possession of the Bolton 'House.' Wesley's ignorance of the contents of the deed, which had been prepared by Mr. Thornton in consultation with William Grimshaw who was in charge of a large part of the northern Methodist Societies, might have led to some alteration in the terms of the deed; and Wesley probably thought it wise to be silent until he knew exactly what had occurred. After these unpleasant meetings were over Wesley instituted inquiries, and when he returned to Bolton on June 14 he announced the result. After preaching in the evening on that date, he says, 'I took occasion to tell the whole congregation there had been a mistake concerning the house which John Bennet imagined I had contrived to make my own property; but Mr. Grimshaw had now cleared it

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 315–317.

up, having assured Mr. Bennet: (1) that I knew nothing of the deed relating to the house, till after it was made; (2) that I had no property in it still; only a clause was inserted whereby Mr. Grimshaw, my brother, and I were empowered to appoint the preachers therein.[1] In fact, the trusts of the deed ran along the lines laid down in the case of the Bristol and Newcastle 'Houses.'

John Wesley held another meeting in Bolton on April 2. He called John Bennet into a room, where he found Mrs. Wesley, John Haime, and Thomas Mitchell. Wesley was determined to get a clear understanding with Bennet concerning his connexion with himself and the Methodist Societies. Mitchell was asked to give his evidence concerning the 'renunciation' statements. He said that Bennet had told him that he intended to separate himself entirely from the Wesleys, and to take some few Societies under his care. He also described the scene when Bennet had accused Wesley of 'Popery.' Bennet acknowledged that Mitchell's statements were true. He explained that his determination to separate from the Wesleys was formed at the time when he heard that a lawyer had been sent to Bolton to get the 'House' made over to Wesley 'with lies and in a clandestine manner.' He also expressed his belief that doctrines lately preached by Wesley were 'Popery.' John Haime then blamed him for speaking anything to others against Wesley before he had spoken to Wesley himself. He owned it would have been best to take that course, but explained that his reason was that he had ceased all correspondence with Wesley for several months, and 'intended to write or speak to him no more than as with another friend.' After this Thomas Mitchell raised a very serious question, and we regret that Mrs. Wesley's presence precluded its thorough discussion. It concerned a rumour which affected John Wesley's moral character. Mitchell affirmed that Bennet had given him 'broad hints' about Wesley's guilt. This charge Bennet at once indignantly denied, saying, 'I never accused Mr. John Wesley of any such thing, neither did I ever believe any such thing.' There had been a correspondence between Wesley and Bennet on this subject before this meeting, and we must confess that Bennet's absolute denial of his belief of Wesley's guilt is reassuring.

[1] *Journal*, iv. 32.

Bennet tells us in his *Journal* that he thought it his duty to clear Wesley of the accusation his wife being present, 'lest some uneasiness should be created between them.' He showed his sound sense by denouncing the scandal. We have thought it necessary to record this part of the business of the meeting because echoes of the charge against Wesley linger to the present time.

On the day after these important interviews John Wesley began another stage of his northern journey. John Bennet remained in Bolton. We shall soon have to part with him, and shall say farewell with regret. It has been said that 'the most marked characteristic of the British race is forgetfulness.' It may be so; but all of us are not disfigured by that defect. We remember the men who, in the early days of Methodism, were 'valiant for the truth,' and John Bennet was one of them. In the early morning light we see him enduring hardship and fighting battles in days when our Church was struggling for its life. His incessant labours in Cheshire and Lancashire did much to lay the foundations and determine the success of Methodism in those counties. He won and held strategic points which have done their part in securing the present prosperity of the Methodist Church in the North of England. We cannot dismiss him with a wave of the hand. Let us watch him for a few moments as he goes on his way to the close of his eventful life.

Before starting on his journey on April 3, John Wesley had a talk with John Haime, and told him that John Bennet was to be allowed to preach in the Bolton 'Room' on the condition that he would not contradict or oppose the doctrines Wesley was accustomed to preach. Bennet felt that he could not accept the use of the 'Room' on such a condition. He therefore went to another place—a little room, in Poor House Lane, belonging to Richard Ashworth—and there he preached to a serious congregation. His influence with many of the members of the Methodist Society in Bolton was strong. It is said that the larger part of that Society followed him. He gave up all thought of preaching any more in Wesley's 'Room.' On April 5, on returning to Bolton, he found that his friends had procured the Market House; he preached in it to a large congregation. A year afterwards Wesley wrote to him offering him the use of the 'Room,' but he replied, 'I thank you for

the kind offer of the "House." At present we have a dwelling-house, and a large room in the town to preach in, both of them very well situated, though not very beautiful either without or within.' In these courtesies we seem to see the return of the kindly light of an old friendship.

It must be remembered that Bennet still continued the practice of visiting the Societies in Cheshire and Lancashire. As we read his *Journal* we think that, as time went on, he began to feel the burden of such visitations, and that his thoughts turned towards a more settled life. At one period the position of a clergyman attracted him ; but in temperament and by conviction he was a Dissenter, and conviction prevailed. In 1754 he took an important step. He determined to become a Dissenting minister. Following the requirements of the Act of Uniformity, he went to Quarter Sessions and offered to take the necessary oaths. He failed at Bakewell. At Chesterfield a clergyman opposed the administration of the oaths to him ' because he was a Methodist.' The counsel who appeared for him pleaded in vain. The Justices unanimously agreed that the oaths should not be administered. Then, after an appeal had been made to Sir Henry Haughton, who lived near Preston and was in the Commission of the Peace, he met with success. Sir Henry brought his influence to bear on the other Justices ; Bennet took the oaths, and the usual certificate was given.

In watching Bennet as he moves among the Societies we see him sometimes at Warburton, a village in Cheshire, near Warrington.[1] Soon after obtaining his certificate he tells us that, in this village, a small ' meeting-house ' was built for him. He promised the people who had built it to take the services on alternate Sundays, and to procure all possible assistance when he could not attend. They agreed to this arrangement, and the meeting-house was ' opened ' by Mr. Walkden, a Dissenting minister from Stockport. On May 12, 1754, Mr. Walkden preached and administered the Sacrament. There were thirty communicants, each of whom, according to Bennet's statement, ' could give an account of God's dealing with their souls.' The class-meeting and the band-meeting had been introduced into the Society, and Bennet aptly describes his flock as ' Methodist Dissenters.'

[1] In his *Journal* Bennet constantly spells the name of this village Warbutton.

We have mentioned the administration of the Sacrament to the members of the Warburton Society in order to draw attention to the fact that Bennet was not, at the time, ordained. Thinking over the matter, he determined to seek ordination at the hands of some of the Dissenting ministers of the neighbourhood. On Saturday, November 9, 1754, he was 'set apart' as the minister of the church at Warburton. Among his manuscripts there is a full account of the solemn service at which he, and his deacons, were ordained. The next day he administered the Sacrament to upwards of thirty communicants. After his settlement as the minister of the Church he did not restrict his work to Warburton; he gave his help to Bolton and other places. His term of service was short. He was worn out with his strenuous labours. In 1759 he died at Warburton, aged only forty-five. After a while his widow removed to Chapel-en-le-Frith. She rejoined the Methodists. Mr. Curnock says that 'she kept open house for Methodism and its preachers, meeting classes and bands, visiting the sick, and keeping herself unspotted from the world.' She died on February 23, 1803, in the eighty-ninth year of her age. Dr. Jabez Bunting preached her funeral sermon. And so, among the Derbyshire hills, John and Grace Bennet rest, waiting for the coming of their Lord.[1]

[1] *Methodist Recorder*, Winter Number, 1902.

XVIII

A LONG JOURNEY

On April 3, 1752, John Wesley and his travelling companions left Bolton and rode to Bank House, near Rochdale. As they go on their way we wonder if Wesley was aware of the existence of a form of agreement that had been drawn up on March 16 by Charles Wesley. It was as follows:

> We whose names are underwritten, being clearly and fully convinced, 1. That the success of the present work of God does in great measure depend on the entire union of all the labourers employed therein; 2. That our present call is chiefly to the members of that Church wherein we have been brought up; are absolutely determined by the grace of God, 1. To abide in the closest union with each other, and never knowingly or willingly to hear, speak, do, or suffer anything which tends to weaken that union; 2. Never to leave the communion of the Church of England without the consent of all whose names are subjoined:
>
> Charles Wesley, John Jones,
> William Shent, John Downes,
> John Wesley, John Nelson.[1]

We do not know when John Wesley signed this document. The position of his signature suggests some delay on his part. It will be seen that the agreement runs along the lines laid down in the paper which was signed on January 9, 1752, but the reference to the Church of England marks an important difference. It manifests the spirit of Charles Wesley, and indicates 'the parting of the ways.' We wonder that John Wesley pledged himself not to leave the Church without the combined consent of all those who had signed the document. If he had formed the intention, one vote against him would have compelled him to abandon his purpose. But we must remember his view of 'leaving the Church.' In his estimation it meant 'to renounce all connexion with it, to attend the service of it no more, and to advise all our Societies to take the

[1] See John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 11, *note*.

same steps.'[1] That was his definition of the term given in a letter to the *Dublin Chronicle* dated June 2, 1789. As to his personal position as a member and minister of the Church of England, his letter in the *London Magazine* for 1760 reveals the opinion he held before and at the time he signed Charles Wesley's document. Replying to some correspondents who cried, 'You have left the Church; you are no Ministers or members of it,' he replies: 'I answer, as I did fourteen years ago to one who warmly affirmed this: Nothing can prove that I am no member of the Church, till I am either excommunicated or renounce her communion, and no longer join in her doctrine, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayer. Nor can anything prove I am no minister of the Church, till I either am deposed from my ministry, or voluntarily renounce her, and wholly cease to teach her doctrines, use her offices, and obey her rubricks.' This is the answer he gave to the Rev. Mr. Church's second letter, and it carries us back to June 17, 1746. Using 1746, 1760 and 1789, as our guides, we can find the sense in which John Wesley used the phrase 'leaving the Church,' and can understand what he meant at the close of his life when he declared that 'he died a member of the Church of England.'[2]

Wesley's tour among the northern Societies was full of interest. It lasted until the middle of July, 1752. His wife and her daughter accompanied him during that period with the exception of an interval when Mrs. Wesley was called away to the South by the sickness of her other children. She soon returned. In reading Wesley's records of this tour in his *Journal* we are constantly tempted to tarry, but the temptation must be resisted. A few incidents, however, demand attention. On Sunday, April 5, Wesley preached in 'the New House' at Leeds which was ready for occupation. On Monday he preached in the shell of the new 'house' at Sheffield. He says, 'All is peace here now, since the trial at York, at which the magistrates were sentenced to rebuild the house which the mob had pulled down. Surely the magistrate has been the minister of God to us for good.' On Sunday, April 19, he preached at Clayworth, where, a year ago, the mob carried all before them. 'But,' he says, 'an honest Justice quelled them at once; so that they are now glad to be quiet and mind their

[1] John Wesley's *Works*, xiii. 237, 8vo ed. [2] *Works*, viii. 444; xiii. 352, 8vo ed.

own business.' At Wrangle two days afterwards all was peace. He must have been convinced that it was possible in some parts of the country to obtain protection from mob violence by appealing to the law.

In a letter written by John Wesley to Ebenezer Blackwell from Epworth on April 16, we see the effect produced on his mind by the absence of riots up to that stage of the tour. He says:

> After taking a round of between three and four hundred miles, we came hither yesterday in the afternoon. My wife is at least as well as when we left London; the more she travels, the better she bears it. . . . I was at first a little afraid she would not so well understand the behaviour of a Yorkshire mob, but there has been no trial. Even the Methodists are now at peace throughout the Kingdom. It is well if they bear this so well as they did war. I have seen more make shipwreck of the faith in a calm than in a storm. We are apt in sunshine weather to lie down and sleep; and who can tell what may be done before we awake?[1]

It was not long before the calm weather ended, and a fierce Yorkshire storm broke on the travellers.

On Friday, April 24, Wesley set out from Grimsby with his wife and daughter. Some time before Mrs. Elizabeth Blow, of Grimsby, had been the pioneer of Methodism in Hull.[2] Wesley had not previously visited Hull. His coming was noised abroad; when he crossed the Humber and landed on the quay he found it covered with people, staring, laughing, and crying out, 'Which is he? Which is he?' He attended prayers at three o'clock in Holy Trinity Church, 'a grand and venerable structure.' Then, between five and six o'clock, a coach called for him, and he and his wife drove off to Myton Car, an open bit of country about half a mile from the town. A huge multitude, rich and poor, horse and foot, with several coaches, soon assembled. 'With a loud voice and a composed spirit' he preached from the searching words, 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' Thousands of people listened attentively, but 'many behaved as if possessed by Moloch.' With unblenched courage he continued speaking, though clods and stones flew about on

[1] *Works*, xii. 161.

[2] The work in Hull, at its commencement, was much assisted by Mrs. Sarah Snowden. During fourteen years she furnished a house there for Wesley and his preachers. See John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 20, 331, *notes*.

every side. When the service was over he, with his wife, walked through the crowd trying to find their coach; but the coachman, unaccustomed to mobs, had driven 'clear away.' The rioters surged around Wesley and his wife; their peril was great. But a gentlewoman, seeing their danger, invited them into her coach. Wesley says, 'She brought some inconveniences on herself thereby, not only as there were nine of us in the coach, three on each side and three in the middle, but also as the mob closely attended us, throwing in at the windows, which we did not think it prudent to shut, whatever came next to hand. But a large gentlewoman who sat in my lap screened me, so that nothing came near me.'

A mob of several thousands marched after the coach until it reached the house where Wesley was staying. When he and his wife alighted and entered the house the rioters revenged themselves on the windows and smashed them with showers of stones. The owner of the house went into the street and made his way to the residence of the mayor, who gave him 'fair words but no assistance.' He then went in quest of constables, and secured two of them. About nine o'clock, supported by these representatives of the majesty of the law, he so dispersed the mob that no two of them were left together. Under cover of midnight the mob rallied once more. But their stay was short. They gave 'one charge more, with oaths and curses, and bricks and stones.' After that all was calm, and Wesley 'slept sound till near four in the morning.' He does not say anything about Mrs. Wesley's 'night thoughts.'[1]

The next day, Saturday, April 25, the travellers mounted their horses and rode to Pocklington, where Wesley preached. Describing the service, he says, 'None opposed or mocked, so that these made full amends for the behaviour of those at Hull.' Then the travellers made their way to York. They knew that another form of opposition would meet them in that city. When Wesley was in Cornwall, in August, 1751, he went to a church, and must have been surprised to find that, by way of a sermon, the parson read an extract from Bishop Lavington's *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*. Before he got to York, on the occasion we are now recording, he found that a somewhat similar plan of compaign had been adopted by a Justice of the Peace of that city.

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 21–22.

Knowing Wesley was coming, he had caused to be cried about the streets, stuck up in public places, and even thrown into many houses, part of Lavington's attack on the Methodists. As Wesley and his companions rode through the gates of York some bitter curses were hurled at them ; but that seemed to be the only result of the Justice's strategy. In the evening an undisturbed service was held in Lady Huntingdon's Chapel in College Street, near the Bedern. It was ' filled with hearers and with the presence of God.' Wesley preached again on Sunday in York, and then rode to Acomb, where John Nelson had been so brutally treated.[1]

On Monday, April 27, Wesley reached Osmotherley—another memorable place. We are now able to see more clearly his travelling companions. In the old Stewards' Book, under the date April 28, 1752, appears the following entry : ' Laid out for Mr. John Wesley, wife, daughter, William Shent and John Haime, 5*s.* 2*d.*' In John Wesley's *Journal* there is a photographic copy of this entry,[2] and it relieves our anxiety concerning Jenny Vazeille, whose name is sometimes omitted from the list of Wesley's companions in this far-extended journey. During his visit to Osmotherley Wesley does not mention Mr. Adams, who first invited him to this interesting place.

On April 30 John Wesley and his companions reached Newcastle ; and after his long journey there was a rest for two days. Then, on the Sunday, he preached to ' the best-dressed congregation ' he had ever seen in the Orphan House. He does not give us any definition of the term ' well-dressed ' ; so we will venture to consider it a compliment. For nearly a week John Wesley's *Journal* fails us. But we are not left altogether without guidance. It is probable that much of his time was spent in the little study on the roof of the ' House.' The management of the Methodist Societies demanded constant attention, but that increasing burden was borne with extraordinary placidity. When we watch him dealing with administrative difficulties we are reminded of what was said of George Washington during the American War by a shrewd observer : ' I reckon it among public blessings that God hath blessed General Washington with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can flourish upon care.' The first

[1] See *ante*, 23. [2] *Journal*, iv. 25.

part of the sentence was not applicable to Wesley at the period we have reached, but the second indicates a fact for which the Methodists have still reason to thank God. It is clear, however, that, notwithstanding his fortitude, he winced under Lavington's attacks on his personal character. The incident at the gate of York could not be allowed to pass unnoticed, so we see him on Friday, May 8, wielding a busy pen. On February 1, 1749–50, when he was in Canterbury, he had replied to the bishop's first attack and had followed up his letter by another, dated November 27.[1] It is probable that the distribution of Lavington's publications among the people of York had shown him that it was necessary to continue to defend himself against the foul charges which had been brought against him by the bishop. As we have seen, Dr. Lavington had published the gossip of a woman in Cornwall, and scattered it over the country.[2] Mr. Green, commenting on the letter Wesley wrote in Newcastle on May 8, 1752, says that it has no permanent value save to show how Wesley's good name was traduced, and how he was able to defend it. We rate it more highly. We must remember that both John and Charles Wesley were charged with grave offences against good morals. Such charges still are peculiarly attractive when brought against Christian ministers, and we feel thankful for Wesley's vindication of his own character. It is emphatic and convincing, but we do not suppose that it produced any effect on Bishop Lavington. In all matters concerning the Methodists he was a man possessed of an inconvincible mind ; but he was not the only person to be considered when John Wesley's honour was exposed to danger, and it had to be defended.

This disagreeable task being finished, and the letter dispatched to the printers, John Wesley turned his attention to other subjects. On May 23 he wrote to Ebenezer Blackwell, to whom he often looked when in financial perplexity. The condition of the Book Room at the Foundery called for immediate attention. Up to 1753 its management was in Wesley's hands ; but it was clear that a change would have to be made, and we can see the beginning of the new arrangement at the point we have reached. Writing to Blackwell, Wesley told him that he had received a letter from Thomas Butts, who seems to have been left in charge of the Book Room,

[1] See Green's *Bibliography*, Nos. 140, 152. [2] See *ante*, 133.

which contained the important news that, after the printers were paid, the money remaining arising from the sale of books did not amount to a hundred pounds a year. Wesley knew that he was losing money on the publication of the *Christian Library*, but he must have been surprised to hear of the small profit realized on the sale of the other books. It must be remembered that, by a deed which John Wesley signed at the time of his brother's marriage, he had engaged to give Charles Wesley a stated annual sum in recognition of the fact that the hymn-books sold at the Foundery contained such a large proportion of his brother's hymns. That was a reasonable arrangement, but it was difficult to carry it into effect when the profit on the sale of all books was less than a hundred pounds a year, which was the sum that Charles Wesley was supposed to receive. Thinking over the dilemma in his study in Newcastle, John Wesley reached a conclusion which he laid before Ebenezer Blackwell: 'It seems therefore absolutely necessary to determine one of these three things: Either to lessen the expense of printing, which I see no way of doing, unless by printing myself; to increase the income arising from the books, and how this can be done, I know not; or to give up those eighty-six copies, which are specified in my brother's deed, to himself to manage them as he pleases. Now which of these ways, all things considered, should you judge most proper to be taken.'?[1] Blackwell gave his advice. Referring to the question two months later, Wesley, writing to him, says, 'I apprehend my brother is not at all desirous of having those copies transferred to him. I cannot easily determine till I have full information concerning the several particulars you touch upon, whether it be expedient to make such an alteration, though it would ease me much, or to let all things remain just as they are. Therefore, I believe it will be best to take no farther step till I return to London.'[2]

This correspondence, and Wesley's further consideration of the problem of the Book Room, had an important result. On February 8, 1753, John Wesley makes an entry in his *Journal* that sounds like a note of triumph. He says: 'A proposal was made for devolving all temporal business, books and all, entirely on the stewards, so that I might have no care upon

[1] *Works*, xii. 162, 8vo ed. [2] *Works*, xii. 163, 8vo ed.

me, in London at least, but that of the souls committed to my charge. Oh, when shall it once be! From this day?' He eagerly declares that so far as he was concerned there should be no delay in accepting this arrangement. Acting on the decision of the London stewards, Thomas Butts and William Briggs, who were charged with the care of the Book Room, wrote and printed a circular letter which was sent to the stewards of the Societies throughout the country. From its opening paragraph we may see the terms of their stewardship. They say: 'Our minister, Mr. John Wesley, for good cause, and upon mature consideration, has intrusted the management of his books to the stewards of this Society, and to us in particular whose names are hereto subscribed. He has, by a proper power of attorney, invested in us the whole care of printing, publishing, and dispersing them; and has likewise given us full authority to receive all their produce, and settle all accounts with booksellers or others who are intrusted with the sale of them.' This exordium is followed by ten regulations laid down for the guidance of the stewards of all the Methodist Societies. They are full of the spirit of the practical business man.[1]

This change of management produced great results; one illustration of that fact may be given. At the opening of 1754 a tract was issued which bore on its title-page the words, 'Printed and Sold at the Foundery, near Upper Moorfields.' In process of time that became a familiar note on pamphlets, books, and other publications issued by the Wesleys. The two stewards were well chosen. Thomas Butts was 'a man as honest as honesty itself,' who had strong views on the subject of the speedy payment of just debts. He had been the travelling companion of both John and Charles Wesley on several occasions during the early years of their itinerant career. William Briggs had been a lay preacher. In June, 1745, we find his name as a leader of one of the Foundery bands. He settled in London, living in Great Tower Street, and holding a responsible position in the Custom-house. On January 28, 1749, he married the daughter of Vincent Perronet, the Vicar of Shoreham. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that year the marriage is recorded, the bridegroom being described as 'William Briggs, Esq., of the Custom-house, secretary to

[1] For these regulations, see Stevenson's *City Road Chapel*, 275, 276

Messrs. Wesley.' Stevenson rightly describes him as 'a man of uncompromising integrity.'[1]

We have left John Wesley, for a few moments, in order that we might group together important facts concerning the Book Room; we must now return to Newcastle and to the month of May, 1752. The gap in Wesley's *Journal* between Sunday, May 3, and Saturday, May 9, still tantalizes us; but Mr. Curnock helps us by telling us the Sermon Register shows that during this interval Wesley preached fourteen sermons in Newcastle. Some of these sermons must have been preached in the Orphan House, and we must be content to join the congregation. We will try to see some of the people who worshipped there. At some time during the week following Sunday, May 10, we know that Mrs. Wesley was summoned to Bristol by the sickness of her children. On May 3 she would be in that 'best-dressed congregation' to which Wesley refers. Her daughter would be with her. We cannot read Jenny Vazeille's thoughts; but of one thing we may be certain—it never crossed her mind that, in a few years, her home would be in Newcastle. Was William Smith present? He was born at Corbridge, near Hexham, in 1736. In 1750 he was confirmed by Bishop Butler; and, at a date we have not been able to ascertain, he was placed in business with a near relative in Newcastle. He was induced to attend the services at the Orphan House, where he joined the Society. When he was little more than twenty years of age John Wesley appointed him as the leader of a class; and it is well known that he became one of the strong pillars of Methodism in Newcastle. It is possible that he may have seen Jenny Vazeille for the first time in 1752; but, passing from surmise to certainty, we can say that they were married on March 7, 1769. On January 17, 1820, Mrs. Smith died, aged eighty-three years; and on May 30, 1824, William Smith passed away at the age of eighty-eight years. Their 'family memorial' may be seen in St. Andrew's Churchyard, Newcastle.[2]

It is certain that John Wesley held early morning services at the Orphan House during this important week. We wish to catch sight of a Mrs. Scott, a member of the Orphan House Society, who, we have reason to know, was accustomed to

[1] Stevenson's *City Road Chapel*, 277.

[2] Stamp's *Orphan House of Wesley*, 119; notes by Rev. J. Conder Nattrass in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, viii. 79, 80.

attend the five o'clock preaching. She had two boys, the elder called William, who was born at Heworth, Durham, on October 17, 1745; the younger, named John, was born in Newcastle on June 4, 1751. If we look into the 'Room' in May, 1752, it is probable we shall see her with William and her baby. We know that she brought up her boys well, taking them to the services and giving them a Christian training. As they grew up they developed voices which gained for them admission to the Orphan House choir. That was a great honour, for the singing at the Orphan House was famed in the town. Mrs. Scott must have listened with joy as they sang the Methodist hymns with a good courage. As time rolled on what became of the boys? William became Baron Stowell, who for many years was the Head of the High Court of Admiralty; and John became the Earl of Eldon, one of the Lord Chancellors of England. Lord Eldon did not forget those early morning services. Let us listen to Dr. Etheridge. Writing in 1860 he says: 'I remember having been told some thirty years ago, by a gentleman in London, who was a member of the "Committee for guarding the Privileges of the Methodist Body," that on one occasion, when some business relating to their department had brought them as a deputation into an interview with the Earl of Eldon, then Lord Chancellor, they found the Duke of Cumberland sitting with his lordship. When the gentlemen of the deputation were introduced, his Royal Highness did not leave the room, but stood apart at a bay-window, while they stated their business to the Chancellor. When this had been done, and they were about to take leave, the prince stepped from his retirement and joined their circle, as if he were pleased to have a little conversation with them. "These gentlemen," said he, "are of the Methodist communion, are they not? I think I heard your lordship mention the name of Mr. Wesley. Ah, I remember once, when a youth, to have sat in the same pew at St. James's with that great man." "Oh, your Royal Highness," replied Lord Eldon, "that is nothing compared with what I can say; for my mother, who was a Methodist, has often taken me, when a child, to hear Mr. Wesley preach at five o'clock in the morning." '[1]

John Wesley, with one interruption caused by a visit to

[1] Etheridge's *Life of Thomas Coke*, 316.

Bristol, continued his work in the northern counties of England until the middle of July. It is only necessary to mention that on Saturday, June 20, he visited Chester. He says that he preached in 'the accustomed place,' a little without the gates, near St. John's Church. This was his first visit to the city. But the phrase 'the accustomed place' indicates the fact that the Methodist pioneers had been busy in Chester. Among them the place of honour must be assigned to John Bennet. Hearing that a Religious Society met somewhere in the city, he went there in 1747. He found out their place of meeting, and the members asked him to preach to them. He did so, and was pressed to stay longer or to visit them again. The result was that Chester was placed on his 'round.' Once more we see a link uniting the 'Religious' and the 'Methodist' Societies.[1] From this beginning the work spread. When John Wesley went to Chester in 1752 he found that the Methodists had just taken 'a much larger house' near St. Martin's-of-the-Ash Church. On Sunday morning he preached in it. In the afternoon he was there again, but, as the 'House' could not contain half the congregation, he stood at the door and preached to the people in the 'House' and to those who had gathered in the square. At four o'clock he went into the Square and preached to a large congregation, among whom were 'abundance of gentry.' The next day, in the evening, he was in the Square again, and preached to 'a vast multitude, rich and poor.'

Wesley lingered in Chester because he was arranging with the captain of a vessel for a passage to Ireland. His plans, however, were upset. On Tuesday, June 23, he received letters which caused him to judge that it was necessary to be in Bristol as soon as possible. So he set out, and did not reach Chester again until July 2. He gives us no hint as to the character of the business that called him to Bristol; and, as Charles Wesley's *Journal* for 1752 is missing, we must leave the matter in the shades of mystery. When he got back to Chester one of the first things he heard was that for the two previous nights the mob had been employed in pulling down the 'House' where he had preached. He asked his informants, 'Were there no magistrates in the city?' Several people answered him, 'We went to the mayor after the first riot, and desired a warrant

[1] See *Early Methodism in and around Chester*, by the Rev. F. F. Bretherton, 27.

to bring the rioters before him ; but he positively refused to grant any warrant, or to take any informations about it.' Being undisturbed, the mob assembled again the next night and finished their work. The new ' House ' being pulled down, Wesley preached on the Saturday in ' the old Room.' On Sunday, July 5, at seven o'clock in the morning he stood near the ruins of the ' House,' and explained the principles and practice of the sect which was ' everywhere spoken against.' Then he went to St. Martin's-of-the-Ash Church. Mr. Bretherton thinks it probable that the Rev. John Baldwin, the Vicar of the church, conducted the service. Wesley must have been astonished as he listened to the sermon. The preacher began nearly in these words : ' The last Lord's Day I preached on " Doing as you would be done to," in hopes of preventing such proceedings as are contrary to all justice, mercy, and humanity. As I could not do that, I have chosen these words for your present consideration, " Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." ' Wesley's wonder was still further increased as the preacher said in closing his sermon : ' I am sorry any such outrage should be committed, particularly in this parish, where I have been teaching so many years. And to how little purpose ! I will remove, as soon as I possibly can, from a place where I can do so little good. Oh, what an account have they to make who have either occasioned or encouraged these proceedings ! May God grant that they may repent in time ! That they may know what spirit they are of ! That they may, before it is too late, acknowledge and love the truth as it is in Jesus ! ' These noble words of a Christian minister deserve a high place in the annals of the Methodist Church.

It is pleasant to record Mr. Baldwin's protest. It raises a hope that before long his example will be followed, and that ' ministers' mobs,' at any rate will cease to exist. Lingering in Chester, we wonder if we can find another source of encouragement, whether we can see on the crest of the dark mountains the line of silver that tells of the passing of the night and the dawn of a peaceful day. In many parts of the country the prejudice against the Methodists was so great that it was enough to say of a doctrine that the Wesleys preached it to provoke its condemnation. Is it possible to find in the

neighbourhood of Chester some man who announced evangelical truths in such a manner as won the attention of crowds, and compelled the opponents of the gospel to become its admirers?

At the close of the year 1741 we see a traveller who is waiting at Parkgate, near Chester, for a ship that will carry him to Ireland. This traveller had been in England for some years. He was a musician, and had not prospered. According to a local legend, during this time of waiting for a ship he was busy with the score of a musical composition; he gave it a touch here and there, deepened its tone, added to it, brought it nearer to perfection. We will forget the roar of the mob and look over his shoulder as he scans the pile of leaves. These words arrest us:

> There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo! the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the Angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, goodwill towards men.

The traveller is no longer a stranger. We are in the presence of George Frederick Handel.

Those who carry the music of *The Messiah* in their heart, and who are familiar with the teaching of the Wesleys, will be the first to admit that, in his great oratorio, Handel has given musical expression to doctrines which those evangelists rescued from neglect. The subject is wide and fascinating, but we must confine ourselves to one of its aspects. Let us put aside prejudice, that stout defender of ignorance, and listen to the music. At once we obey the command, 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' We dismiss our wandering thoughts; we fix our eyes on Him. We watch Him in the hours of His humiliation; we see Him as He hangs on the cross. Our sympathies are stirred by the words, 'He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' In the presence of that sorrow and grief we forget those who are near us; we think of the anguish of the divine sufferer; we are alone with Him. Then there

comes the great revelation: 'Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows! He was wounded for *our* transgression; He was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him. And with His stripes *we* are healed.' Slowly the fact that our sins have nailed Him to the tree fills our mind. We forget all the generations of the past; we think only of our share in the great tragedy. We bow our head and assent to the condemnation, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.' We think of our cruel abandonment of the Good Shepherd, of our own sins and evil ways. But the chorus has changed its time, and the light begins to dawn. 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' Hope that was drooping and dying within us lifts up its head. 'The iniquity of us all.' Then my sins were laid on Him! As that conviction grows within us the venture of faith takes place; and the peace which passes understanding, and the new love that casts out all fear, fill the heart. No one who understands Wesley's teaching concerning conversion will doubt that, in 1741, he and Handel pointed out the same way to the cross.

One of the most severely attacked teachings of Wesley was his doctrine of assurance. Does Handel differ from him? In the third part of *The Messiah* there is an 'Air' which is not often sung in England. The audience is supposed to be weary, and so it is omitted. But its words are full of Christian confidence: 'If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who makes intercession for us.' There can be no doubt that the Wesleys and Handel were in agreement on a doctrine which, when it is believed and firmly held, 'drives all our fears away.'

It was fortunate for religion in England that those who would not listen to the Wesleys were allured to listen to Handel. The influence of *The Messiah* in this and other countries is beyond all our powers of estimation. Thinking of the subject we have only touched, we have wondered if the three men drew their knowledge of the evangelical doctrines from the same source. Handel was so long in England that

we sometimes forget that his country of origin was Germany. As we have written about him our eyes have often turned towards the year 1738. We have seen Charles Wesley in London bending over Luther's commentary on Galatians. Then we have followed John Wesley to the meeting of a Religious Society held in Nettleton Court, Aldersgate Street, where he listened to one who was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. It was then that his 'heart was strangely warmed,' and he felt that he did trust in Christ —Christ alone—for salvation. In his description of his experience he says, 'An assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.'[1] Handel had evidently felt the influence of Luther, to whom the world has never paid its debt of obligation.

We have kept John Wesley waiting in Chester for some time, and must now return to him. He was disappointed in his hope of finding a ship ready to sail to Ireland, so made up his mind to return to Whitehaven. Taking his wife and her daughter with him, he arrived there on Friday, July 10, 1752. On the following Monday he bespoke the cabin in a ship bound for Dublin which only waited for a wind. But the ship left without him. Fortunately, another ship for Ireland had just weighed anchor, and so Wesley and his companions got on board and sailed without delay. In those days the voyage generally occupied about twenty-four hours, but there was a head wind, and often a rolling sea. On this occasion the passage lasted for nearly four days. It was not until Friday evening that Dublin was reached. The rolling seas brought great discomfort to Mrs. Wesley and her daughter. On Saturday John Wesley went to see the new chapel which had been completed and opened. It stood in Whitefriar Street, and was the first that had been built in Ireland. Wesley says it was nearly of the same size and form with that of Newcastle, but had deeper galleries on three sides. Mr. Crookshank supplies us with details which enable us to see 'the House,' as Wesley takes care to call it, more clearly. At each end of it there was a house for the accommodation of the preachers. The preaching-house was said to hold a thousand persons when well filled; the galleries were

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 191, 192.

deep and elevated, supported by massive pillars. An upper story was divided into a suite of rooms, with movable partitions, and in the centre there was a long lobby. Here the leaders' meetings were held and the classes and bands met. Mr. Lunell subscribed four hundred pounds towards the erection. For almost a century the chapel was looked upon as 'the cathedral of Irish Methodism.' Very soon after its erection a large mob attacked it. First of all the windows were smashed, then the mob broke open the doors. But a company of soldiers arrived, and the chief rioters were apprehended. They were prosecuted, and true bills were found against them. But the jury, being nearly all Romanists, brought in a verdict of 'Not guilty.' Mr. Crookshank says, 'The apprehension and trial of these miscreants, however, struck terror into the hearts of their companions, so that the Society subsequently enjoyed great quietness, and the members could even walk unmolested through the principal streets of the city.'[1]

John Wesley remained in Ireland until October 11, filling up all his days with work. It is only necessary to record the most important fact which occurred during this visit. He had been much troubled by reports he had received concerning some of the preachers, and he determined to ascertain the facts of the case. He went to Limerick, and on August 14 and 15 he held his first Irish Conference there. It is fortunate that the *Minutes* of this Conference have been preserved. Jacob Rowell took notes of the proceedings, and they may be found in the Appendix to the first volume of the printed *Minutes of the Conference.*[2] Mr. Crookshank summarized the business as follows:

'There were present Messrs. Larwood, Haughton, Cownley, Fisher, Walsh, Rowell, Kead, Swindells, Whitford, and James Morris. They may be regarded as the entire staff of itinerants then in Ireland. From the *Minutes* of this Conference we learn that there had been a general decay of the Societies in Ireland. It was partly occasioned by the teaching of Antinomian and Calvinian doctrines; partly by the want of discipline; and partly by the misbehaviour of preachers. All present declared that they did not believe in the doctrine

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 89, 90. For picture of the exterior of the chapel see John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 375.

[2] See *Minutes*, i. 708–709, 8vo ed.

of absolute predestination; but three of them added, "We believe there are some persons who are absolutely elected: but we believe likewise that Christ died for all; that God willeth not the death of any man, and that thousands are saved who are not absolutely elected. We believe, further, that those who are thus elected cannot finally fall; but we believe that other believers may fall, and that those who were once justified may perish everlastingly."

'It was resolved, however, that in future no man should be received as a fellow labourer unless he thoroughly agreed to both Methodist doctrine and discipline; and that if any preacher violated this agreement, letters should be sent to all the Societies disowning him.

'It was also decided that if a man was not able to preach twice each day he should be only a local preacher; and that of the two, it was better to give up the evening preaching in a place than the morning; that the congregations must constantly kneel during prayer, stand both in singing and while the text was read, and be serious and silent while the service lasted, and when coming and going away. Persons not having band tickets were not to be present at the public meetings of the bands, for this would make the tickets cheap and discourage those who had them.

'It was arranged that Quarterly Meetings should be held during the year at Cork, Limerick, Coolalough, and Lisburn, on the first Tuesdays after Michaelmas, Christmas, Lady-day, and Midsummer.

'Previous to this nearly all the preachers had been single men, without any settled allowance; but as now at least one-third were married, it was for the first time settled that there should be a stated provision for each. Preachers were to be allowed at least £8; and, if possible, £10 a year for clothing; and £10 a year was to be allowed for the support of each preacher's wife, with something additional for children.[1]

'The itinerants were enjoined to preach frequently and strongly on fasting, and to practise it every Friday, health permitting. Next to luxury, they were to avoid idleness, and were to spend one hour every day in private prayer. . . .

'Ireland was divided into six rounds or circuits, called

[1] Jacob Rowell says that Mrs. Edwards and her three children were to receive £21; and Mrs. Kead and Mrs. Morris £10; and Mrs. Fisher ten guineas.

Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Athlone, Wexford, and the North. Of the ten preachers present it was arranged that Messrs. Haughton, Whitford, and Larwood should return to England, and their place be supplied by Messrs. Edwards, Greenwood, and John Fenwick; and that each preacher should remain for about three months in succession on his appointed round.'[1]

The *Minutes* of the Limerick Conference create some anxiety in a mind that is capable of reading 'between the lines,' but, as usual, it is possible to detect the bright side. Philip Embury was at one of Wesley's services, and we know that, on Christmas Day, he found the peace that passeth understanding. Yonder, in Ballingarrane, we see a girl of eighteen years of age joining the Methodist Society, and entering into the same experience of salvation. Her name is Barbara Ruckle, but she is better known to many of us, on both sides of the Atlantic, as Barbara Heck.

On October 6,[2] Wesley his wife and her daughter arrived at the place now called Queenstown, hoping to embark for Bristol. But a violent storm detained them. It was a tempestuous season. Towards the end of September a storm raged along the Irish coast in which more than thirty ships were lost, and it seemed as if the rough winds had returned. But after waiting at Queenstown for five days Wesley and his companions got out of harbour and sailed for Bristol. The weather improved; and after three days the ship reached Kingroad. On the voyage Wesley refreshed himself by reading Pascal's *Thoughts on Religion,* one of his mother's favourite books.[3]

John Wesley stayed in Bristol until nearly the end of October. He does not mention the fact that, on October 16, he held a Conference there, but Myles gives us information concerning one part of its proceedings which is of special importance. The subject of an allowance to the preachers was raised, as at the Limerick Conference. It was agreed 'that the preachers should receive a stipend of £12 per annum, in order to provide themselves with necessaries.' Commenting on this fact Myles says, 'Before this period the stewards of each Society supplied the preachers with what they wanted, so that they

[1] Crookshank's *Methodism in Ireland*, i. 91–93. Mr. Crookshank's 'Summary' of the business should be compared with Jacob Rowell's *Notes*.

[2] In Wesley's *Journal*, on September 14, he mentions the coming in of the New Style. The fact is quietly noticed.

[3] For Pascal and Wesley, see articles by Mr. Brigden in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vii. 60, 84.

received no money except what was voluntary from individuals and a little from the stewards to pay their travelling expenses. The consequence was, some popular preachers had abundance, while others were comparatively destitute. By this regulation the evil was remedied. But it was some years before this rule was universally adopted.[1]

On Sunday, October 29, the day before John Wesley left Bristol, we find an entry in his *Journal* which makes a strong appeal to us. He says:

> *Sunday*, the 29th, was a useful day to my soul. I found more than once trouble and heaviness, but I called upon the name of the Lord, and He gave me a clear, full approbation of His way, and a calm thankful acquiescence in His will. I cannot but stand amazed at the goodness of God. Others are most assaulted on the weak side of their soul, but with me it is quite otherwise. If I have any strength at all (and I have none but what I have *received*), it is in forgiving injuries. And on this very side am I assaulted more frequently than on any other. Yet leave me not here one hour to myself, or I shall betray myself and Thee!

There is little doubt that the editor of his *Journal* is right when, in a note, he says, 'We may safely assume that the sorrows of his married life are becoming acute.' This paragraph reminds us of some of the cipher entries in his earlier *Diaries*; but, from its place in the *Journal* it seems to appeal to his friends for kindly judgement and the help that comes through sympathy. At a later stage we shall have to deal with the consequences of his unfortunate marriage, but, while seeing both sides of a question that is still debated, we must be touched by Wesley's appeal. As we continue to watch him he seems to us a man whose life was 'guided by faith and matchless fortitude.'

John Wesley got back to London on Saturday, November 4, after an absence of more than seven months. His Sermon Register shows that on Sunday he preached at the Foundery, at Spitalfields, at West Street, and at Westminster. As to the last-named place, the annotator of his *Journal* tells us there is a tradition that either at that time or later the preaching-room at Westminster was on, or near, the site of the

[1] *Chronological History*, 76, 4th ed. The reception of money by 'the popular preachers' was in defiance of one of the 'Rules of an Assistant.' See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 217.

Wesleyan Methodist Central Hall, opposite Westminster Abbey. At this point we lose the assistance of the *Journal* so far as the closing month of 1752 is concerned. We must leave Wesley busy preparing books for *The Christian Library*, brooding over his loss of money caused by this enterprise, and cherishing a hope that the next generation might know the value of it.

XIX

A CRITICAL YEAR

The year 1753 occupies an important place in the history of Methodism, but the describer of its events meets with special difficulties. The entries in John Wesley's *Journal* are often disappointingly brief, and blank spaces are not infrequent. As for Charles Wesley's printed *Journal*, it fails us almost altogether. The entries begin on November 29 and cease after December 6; they are not resumed until July 8, 1754. We derive little help from the letters appended to his *Journal*. Many of them are headed with the day of the month, but the year is left to the researches of the ingenious explorer. It is fortunate that we have some light on the principal events of the year.

On March 19, 1753, John Wesley set out from Bristol. He was accompanied by his wife. After an eight days' journey they reached Chester. The scene there was changed. A new mayor had been elected who refused to be mob-ruled. His name was Thomas Broster. Wesley says he was a man of courage and honesty, who would not suffer a riot of any kind. No one talked of 'pulling down houses'; there was peace through all the city. On April 3 Wesley visited Bolton; once more there was sunshine on the threshold of his long northern journey. The members there were increased in grace no less than in number; they 'walked closely with God, lovingly and circumspectly with one another, and wisely towards those who are without.' Recent occurrences had shaken but not shattered the Society.

Encouraged by what he had seen in Chester and Bolton, Wesley made ready for his long journey. He was on his way to Scotland. Mrs. Wesley was with him; and on April 14 he met a lay preacher who was also to be his travelling companion. His name was John Hampson; he is well known to those who are acquainted with the early history of

Methodism. Two days later we see the little company at Bowness, in Cumberland. The landlord of the inn where they had stayed is guiding them over the Frith; and as they ride along we hear a fragment of their conversation. It was on a subject with which Wesley was familiar. The guide asks, 'How much a year do you get by preaching?' Wesley tells him; and then shows him that the principal reward he received was the consciousness that by his preaching men were being saved. We hear the landlord's voice no more; he was silent through sheer astonishment. Dumfries was reached; then the travellers proceeded to Thornhill, where they stayed the night. Wesley long remembered this ride. He found the road over which he travelled far better than the turnpike road between London and Canterbury. The inns also excited his admiration. He says, 'What miserable accounts pass current in England of the inns in Scotland! Yet here, as well as wherever we called in our whole journey, we had not only everything we wanted, but everything readily and in good order, and as clean as I ever desire.'

On April 17, setting out from Thornhill at about four o'clock in the morning, the travellers reached Glasgow. Wesley's home there was with the Rev. Dr. John Gillies, at whose invitation he had come to the city. He was the minister of the College Church, and was a man in full sympathy with the work that was being done by Wesley and Whitefield. At the time of Wesley's visit he was waiting for clearer light on the possibility of the consciousness of personal salvation; it may be that his invitation to Wesley had its origin in a desire to consult him on that great spiritual experience.[1]

On Wednesday, April 18, at seven o'clock in the evening, Wesley attended a service in the College Church. There was such a large congregation that he had much difficulty in getting into the building. Dr. Gillies was the preacher. Before he concluded the service with 'the blessing' he announced that a meeting would at once be held, at which some hymns would be sung, and he suggested that those who were so minded might retire. His announcement only slightly diminished the congregation. Wesley says that 'scarce any stirred till all was ended.' It must be remembered

[1] Dr. Gillies was the first biographer of Whitefield, and the author of the once well-known *Historical Collections of the Success of the Gospel.* See Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, ii. 164–166.

that the singing of 'hymns' in churches in Scotland was an innovation much resented by some people who were only familiar with the singing of 'psalms' in public worship. In this historic 'after-meeting' Dr. Gillies gave out four hymns, which were sung by a choir of about a dozen young men. In a letter to Wesley Dr. Gillies tells him of the effect of the innovation he had introduced. He says:

> The singing of hymns here meets with greater opposition than I expected; serious people are much divided. Those of better understanding and education are silent; but many others are so prejudiced that they speak openly against it, and look upon me as doing a very sinful thing. I beg your advice, whether to answer them only by continuing in the practice of the thing, or whether I should also publish a sheet of arguments from reason, and Scripture, and the example of the godly. Your experience of dealing with people's prejudice makes your advice of the greater importance. I bless the Lord for the benefit and comforts of your acquaintance.[1]

On the next day Wesley preached twice in the open air at a place about a quarter of a mile from Glasgow. The weather continued so wet and the wind so blustering that Wesley, on Friday, April 20, was prevented from carrying out his intention of preaching in the same place. Dr. Gillies, however, came to his assistance. He desired him to preach in his church. He did so. The request and his own compliance with it filled Wesley with amazement. In his *Journal* there is a cry of astonishment: 'Surely with God nothing is impossible! Who would have believed, five and twenty years ago, either that the minister would have desired it or that I should have consented to preach in a Scotch kirk!' He attended the church on Sunday, April 22, both morning and evening, and was delighted with the reverence of the congregations. He says, 'The behaviour of the people was beyond anything I ever saw but in our congregations. None bowed or courtesied to each other, either before or after service; from the beginning to the end of which none talked, or looked at any but the minister.' The conduct of a well-trained Methodist congregation was Wesley's ideal of reverent behaviour in public worship; his comparison was a great compliment to Dr. Gillies's audience. On the same day he preached twice in the open air and once in the prison. In the latter place he was

[1] Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, ii. 164, 165

again impressed by the good conduct of the hearers. All the felons, as well as the debtors, behaved with such reverence as he had never seen in any prison in England. Few clergymen had a wider experience of prison-preaching, and the commendation, therefore, possessed exceptional value. On Monday, April 23, he left Glasgow and went to Edinburgh. He had intended to go round by Kilsyth to see Mr. Robe, the minister of that town, who was dying. But the weather prevented him. We can imagine the solemn joy with which these two great revivalists would have talked together and strengthened each other's hands. But, so far as we know, on this earth they never met.[1]

Wesley passed through Edinburgh, and on April 24 reached Berwick. Two days later he went to Alnwick, where he had a special meeting of the Society. The members had been harassed above measure by a few violent Predestinarians, who had at length separated from them. In Wesley's comment on their departure, we find a valuable statement of his position in respect of persons who differed from him in their opinions. Speaking of the separatists he says, 'It is well they saved me the trouble, for I can have no connexion with those who will be contentious. These I reject, not for their opinion, but for their sin; for their unchristian temper and unchristian practice; for being haters of reproof, haters of peace, haters of their brethren and, consequently, of God.' Having comforted the distracted Society at Alnwick, he returned to Newcastle, where, on May 4, he held the first General Quarterly Meeting of all the stewards in the neighbourhood 'in order thoroughly to understand both the spiritual and temporal state of every Society.'

After visiting several towns and villages in Northumberland and Yorkshire, towards the end of the month of May, Wesley reached Leeds and held an important Conference. It began on May 22. His own description of it is terse, and gives us but slight information concerning its proceedings. He says, 'Most of our preachers met and conversed freely together; as we did, morning and afternoon, to the end of the week, when our Conference ended with the same blessing as it began, God giving us to be not only of one heart but of one judgement.' The description gives us no idea of the subjects discussed and

[1] For Mr. Robe and William Darney see *ante*, 26.

the conclusions reached. It is fortunate that we are not left in uncertainty, for the 'conversations' of the Conference concerned matters which had a strong influence on the future of Methodism. Once more Jacob Rowell, whom we met at the Limerick Conference, shall guide us. His carefully written report of this Leeds Conference was afterwards printed, and is to be found in the Appendix to the first volume of the revised *Minutes of Conference*, issued in 1862.[1] Let us watch this company of early Methodist preachers and note the business they transacted.

Wesley says that 'most of the preachers' attended this Conference. The list given by Rowell contains the following names: John Wesley, William Grimshaw, and John Milner, who were clergymen; Samuel Larwood, John Haughton, Christopher Hopper, William Shent, John Edwards, William Hitchens, John Fisher, Thomas Walsh, James Jones, John Nelson, Francis Walker, Joseph Jones, Thomas Mitchell, Nicholas Gilbert, John Hampson, Edward Perronet, Jonathan Maskew, Matthew Lowes, Jacob Rowell, John Haime, Jonathan Catlow, William Fugill, John Turnough, James Scholefield, and Enoch Williams, who are described as 'Travelling Preachers.' In addition there were present sixteen 'Local Preachers'; that is men who assisted the Wesleys 'in one place.' The names of some of them are familiar to us. We know Thomas Colbeck, Thomas Lee, and Francis Scott; the following are not so well known: Titus Knight, Benjamin Beanland, Joseph Bradley, John Johnson, Thomas Slaton, Thomas Johnson, William Allwood, John Thorpe, Matthew Watson, William Parker, J. Coats, William Greenwood, and John Greenwood. There were therefore forty-four preachers present at this Conference. England, Wales, and Ireland were represented; and a far-seeing eye may read in this little assembly a prophecy of times that were to come.

We will note the most important items of business transacted by this Conference. It was determined, first of all, that in future the Conference should be held in London, Bristol, and Leeds, 'by turns.' This arrangement seems like a first step in the direction of holding a 'yearly Conference of the People called Methodists.' It also secured opportunities of attending the Conference for preachers who were stationed in

[1] See *Minutes of Conference*, i. 717–720.

the extreme north of England. Nothing was said at this stage concerning Conferences in Ireland.

When this matter had been settled a question arose concerning Whitefield and his preachers. We have noted the growth of a better understanding between the Wesleys and Whitefield. Their personal relations had become cordial.[1] At the commencement of the year the Wesleys had given a practical proof of their friendship. Up to that time Whitefield and his people had worshipped in a wooden 'Tabernacle' which stood near the Foundery in London; but those who passed through the neighbourhood in the month of March, 1753, saw that a brick building was rising on the site of the old 'Tabernacle.' Its erection, of course, interfered with Whitefield's services, and the Wesleys came to his help and offered him the use of the Foundery during the erection of the new building. On March 3 he wrote to Charles Wesley, and thanked him and his brother for the offer; he also promised that 'the favour should be returned' if the Wesleys ever had occasion to borrow the 'Tabernacle.'[2]

We have seen that at Alnwick the members of the Methodist Society had been troubled by 'Predestinarians.' Such was the case in London and in other parts of the country at that time. We do not wonder that the Conference considered the subject. The discussion arose on the following question: 'Predestinarian Preachers have done much hurt among us; how may this be prevented in future?' The answer is as follows:

> 1. Let none of them preach any more in our Societies. 2. Let a loving and respectful letter be wrote to Mr. Whitefield, wherein he may be desired to advise his Preachers not to reflect (as they have done continually, and that both with great bitterness and rudeness) either upon the doctrines, or discipline, or person of Mr. Wesley, among his own Societies; to abstain himself (at least when he is among Mr. Wesley's people) from speaking against either his doctrines, rules, or Preachers; not to declare war anew, as he has done by a needless digression in his late sermon.

John Wesley carried out the direction of the Conference and wrote to Whitefield. He kept a copy of his letter, and it is some consolation to know that he afterwards wrote on it the words, 'He denies all.' We presume that the denial

[1] See *ante*, 168. [2] See Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 19.

relates to his own actions. It cannot cover those of some of his preachers. Before he received Wesley's letter in May, he had been obliged to restrain one of his preachers from the conduct which is condemned by the Conference. On March 10 he had sent this preacher a letter in which the following sentences occur: 'I do not like writing against anybody, but I think that wisdom, which dwells with prudence, should direct you not to fill Mr. Wesley's people (who expect you will serve them) with needless jealousies. I hope to see the time when you will talk less of persons and things, and more of Him who is the common head of His whole mystical body. This, and this alone, can make and keep you steady in yourself, and extensively useful to others.'[1] Whitefield wrote this letter about the time he received the Wesleys' offer of the use of the Foundery; it shows that he found it necessary to utter a warning against conduct such as the Leeds Conference condemned.

On the second day of the Conference the usual strict inquiries as to the moral condition of the Societies were made. The attention of the preachers was directed to the observance of the 'Rules.' The result of the conversation was that it was determined to act strongly in the case of members who married unbelievers; also in cases of Sabbath-breaking, dram drinking, evil-speaking, unprofitable conversations, lightness, and contracting debts without sufficient care to discharge them. The preachers were directed to call the attention of their congregations, not only to the 'Rules' in which these evils are condemned, but to all branches of 'practical religion,' and to warn the Societies in every place that none 'who is hereafter guilty can remain with us.'

The proceedings of the closing day of the Conference are of exceptional interest. The business specially concerned the preachers. Wesley held the opinion that the way to lift the people to a high moral and spiritual position was to see that his preachers should stand without reproach. The first question asked in the morning was: 'Has any of you any objections against any of the "Twelve Rules of an Itinerant Preacher"?' In our description of the proceedings of the first Conference, held in June, 1744, we made a passing reference to the 'Rules of an Assistant.'[2] During the nine years that

[1] See Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, ii. 168.
[2] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 216, 217.

had passed certain alterations had been made in the document. Its title had been changed, and improvements had been introduced, but substantially the ' Rules ' had preserved their identity. In the revised first volume of the *Minutes of Conference*, published in 1862, we find in parallel columns the six editions of the *Large Minutes* published during John Wesley's lifetime. We are concerned at present with the first column. Through some hesitation in the mind of the modern editor it is headed 1753 or 1757, but we readily accept Mr. Green's verdict in favour of the first date. He says that ' as many of the entries in the first edition of the *Large Minutes* are taken from 1753, and none from any subsequent record, the presumption is that the little undated tract was printed in the year just named.'[1]

We may safely conclude that the ' Twelve Rules of a Helper,' which were read to the Leeds Conference and accepted by those who were present, were those which we will quote. Those who were present in 1753 expressed their determination by the grace of God cheerfully to observe them. They have been a standard applied to the conduct of Methodist ministers for more than one hundred and seventy years.

In the Leeds Conference of 1753 it was asked, ' What are the rules of a Helper? ' The following answer was given:

1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away time: neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.

2. Be serious. Let your motto be, Holiness to the Lord. Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.

3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women: particularly with young women in private.

4. Take no step towards marriage without acquainting us with your design, as soon as you conveniently can. ["Us" means the Wesleys.]

5. Believe evil of no one: unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything. You know the Judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.

6. Speak evil of no one. Else *your* word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast, till you come to the person concerned.

7. Tell every one what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, and as soon as maybe, else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.

[1] See Green's *Bibliography*, 82.

8. Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character, than with that of a dancing-master. A Preacher of the Gospel is the servant of all.

9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin: not of fetching wood (if time permit), or drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes, or your neighbour's.

10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And in general, do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience sake.

11. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore, spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most.

12. Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct: partly in preaching, and visiting the flock from house to house. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful you should do that part of the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for His glory.[1]

It will be seen these 'Rules' were intended to guide the preachers in matters which concerned their private conduct, their work, their relation to each other, the people, and the Wesleys. They remained practically unaltered until 1780, when the following paragraph was added to the eleventh rule:

Observe. It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that Society; but to save as many souls as you can, to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord: And remember! A Methodist Preacher is to mind every point, great and small in the Methodist discipline! Therefore you will need all the sense you have, and to have all your wits about you.[2]

Having confirmed the 'Rules of a Helper,' which have done so much to produce that unity of spirit which has for so long characterized the ministers of Methodism, the Conference proceeded to another act of great significance. The fraternal feeling among the preachers has been strengthened by the fact that in the examination of character, year by year, every man from the President downward has to submit to a scrutiny of his character and of his teaching. We may confidently appeal

[1] *Minutes of Conference*, i. 492–496, 8vo ed.

[2] For the 'Rules' as they stand to-day see *Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline*, 271, 272. Fifth edition. The paragraph just quoted was removed from the end of the eleventh to the end of the 'Rules' in 1779.

to the *Minutes* of the Leeds Conference for a proof of the antiquity of the practice. The question was asked: 'Has any of you any objections to the life or doctrine of any Itinerant Preacher?' The names of the preachers were mentioned one by one, and any member of the Conference might raise an objection. After close examination this answer was recorded, 'We are all well satisfied with each other.'

At this distance of time it is difficult to distinguish the voices of the men who spoke at the Leeds Conference. We hear a murmur of sound, but have to be content with the consolation we derive from the whispers of Jacob Rowell's quill pen. When the examination of character was completed, those who were present heard a strong voice making a strange request. It was the voice of John Edwards. When the discussion on the 'Predestinarians' and Whitefield was proceeding we glanced at him, knowing his history. He had been in association with the Wesleys, according to Myles, since 1747. He was an Irishman; and at the Limerick Conference he had been stationed in Athlone Rounds, North, Cork, and Limerick—a wide stretch of country. He was a valuable man, conspicuous for his work as an evangelist. In former years he was closely associated with Whitefield, and was one of his preachers. How far he was in sympathy with Whitefield's Calvinistic views at the time cannot be stated with precision. Through the ministry of Jacob Rowell we find that at this Conference he asked permission to settle permanently in Leeds.

If he had been willing to become a 'Local Preacher' there might have been no objection to his retirement; but the evidence before us shows that he wished to be stationed at the new chapel, and to have possession of the preacher's house which was attached to it. It was an extraordinary request. To our relief, Jacob Rowell is busy taking notes. From them we see how the Conference dealt with the matter. In answer to the question, 'Is it expedient that John Edwards should settle at Leeds?' The Conference said, 'He can in nowise consent to stay there always. But neither he nor we have any objections to his spending half a year in Leeds Circuit, as any other Travelling Preacher: and he may make a trial for the two or three next months, as joint Assistant with William Shent.' The results of this experiment are known. When the appointed time expired, he refused to give up the preachers'

house and the chapel. He was very popular with many of the Leeds Methodists, who supported him in his action. When he was compelled to leave the house and chapel, it is said that 'he drew part of the Society with him, embraced Calvinistic opinions, built the White Chapel, and ministered usefully in Leeds for thirty years.'[1]

Jacob Rowell has rescued from oblivion another interesting and important item of the business of this Conference. It relates to the difficulties of finance, which did much to hinder the work of Methodism at this period. The question was asked, 'What are those hardships upon the Preachers which it is in our power to remove?' The reply was, 'One of the greatest is that which lies on the married Preachers. There is no provision for their wives.' We have seen that an attempt had been made to solve this difficult problem, but the relief given was slight. It was a long time before a complete solution was reached, but the preliminary efforts of the Leeds Conference are suggestive, and worthy of record. The Conference faced the fact that some of the preachers had married in haste. The question was asked, 'Ought not the Preachers to be careful how they bring these difficulties on themselves?' To which this reply was given, 'Undoubtedly they ought. Therefore any Preacher who marries without first consulting his Ministers, or his brethren, should not take it amiss that he is then left to himself to provide for his wife how he can.' The conversation then took the following course:

Q. But if a Preacher do consult them first, and still if he marry one that has nothing?

A. He must be content to return to his temporal business, and so commence a Local Preacher.

Q. That the Societies may the more readily assist the married Preachers, ought not their wives to be as exemplary as possible?

A. Certainly they ought. In particular, they ought never to be idle, and constantly to attend the morning preaching.

Q. But how may they have what is needful with the least trouble?

A. (1) Let the Assistant inquire what each Preacher's wife wants, at every Quarterly Meeting. (2) Let those wants be supplied, first of all, out of the common stock. (3) Let a letter be wrote to all the Societies upon this head.

Q. Do the Stewards behave well with regard to the Preachers?

A. Most of them do; some do not.

[1] For a further account of John Edwards see Laycock's *Methodist Heroes in the Great Haworth Round*, 137, 138.

Q. How may this be remedied?

A. (1) Let the Assistant explain to the Stewards in every place the nature of their office. (2) Let him immediately displace those who behave amiss and will not be reproved.[1]

After the preachers had been stationed in the twelve circuits in England, Wales, and Ireland, the business of the Conference came to an end.

The Conference being over, John Wesley resumed his itinerant work. On Sunday, May 27, he preached at Birstall. The next day he stayed there for rest and correspondence. We are especially interested in a letter he wrote to his intimate friend Ebenezer Blackwell. It reveals the subject which was engaging his most serious thoughts. In it he says, 'I believe the harvest has not been so plenteous for many years as it is now in all the North of England: but the labourers are few. I wish you could persuade our friend to share the labour with me. One of us should in any wise visit both the North and Ireland every year. But I cannot do both, the time will not suffice; otherwise I should not spare myself. I hope my life, rather than my tongue, says, I desire only to spend and to be spent in the work.'[2] There is a note of pathos in this letter. We are accustomed to think of John Wesley as a man of indomitable purpose, who faced all difficulties with cheerfulness, and smiled at the word 'impossible.' His confession of his inability to do work which ought to be done is strange to us. But we must remember that at this time his health was being slowly wasted by his incessant toil. In some moments of depression he was inclined to think that his life-work would soon be done.

As he sits yonder in Birstall let us try to understand the position Wesley had to face. There can be no doubt that the beauty of the fields whitening for the harvest came before him; but it filled him with concern. Did he think of one who had said in far-distant years, 'The harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest?' We think he offered that prayer continually. We remember that the habit of incessant prayer ruled his life to its close. But in 1753 the answer seemed to delay its coming. Let us look at

[1] *Minutes of Conference*, i. 719, 8vo ed. [2] Wesley's *Works*, xii.165, 8vo ed.

the situation in respect of the labourers in the great harvest that shone before the eyes of Wesley.

In William Myles's *Chronological History of the People called Methodists* there are lists containing the names of 'the first, second, and third races of Methodist Preachers.' They show the condition of Methodism in respect of 'labourers' during the periods 1739 to 1765, 1766 to 1790, and 1791 to 1812. We are concerned at present with the first section of the list. We find that in 1741, 1749, and 1752 no lay preacher was appointed for the itinerant work. In 1753 four were received and employed. But we must always remember that in several cases the length of itinerant service was brief. For instance, in the case of the four men received in 1753, one left the itinerant work at the end of three years; two 'departed' at the end of sixteen years; and only one continued to the close of his life. It is not likely we shall forget Thomas Olivers so long as his noble hymn 'The God of Abraham praise' is sung in Methodist congregations. In 1753 we see him making his way to Cornwall to begin his career as an itinerant preacher. When Wesley was brooding over the lack of labourers, we wonder what he thought of the itinerant preachers whom he had met at the Leeds Conference. Our curiosity was excited as they dispersed. There were twenty-five travelling preachers who had been present. What became of them? Ten died in the work; twelve 'departed' from it; two were excluded; we are not able to say what became of the last in our list. John Wesley understood the difficulty of gathering the harvest when he looked at his little band of ever-changing labourers. It is true that he was enheartened when he thought of some of his local preachers—the men who helped him in one place—but his letter to Blackwell shows his wider vision. He longed for the coming of the day when the number of his itinerating preachers would be so enlarged that it would be possible to reap the great harvest.[1]

Those who have watched the gradual growth of the membership of the Conference will be disappointed to find that only two clergymen, William Grimshaw and John Milner, were present to support John Wesley at Leeds. That matter is full of significance. Wesley's old friend, Samuel Taylor, died

[1] See Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, ii. 126, 127, for a view of 'the serious sifting' during the years that followed the founding of Methodism.

in 1750. When we recall figures familiar to us in the early Conferences in association with the Wesleys we think of John Meriton, Charles Graves, Henry Piers, John Hodges, Richard Thomas Bateman, and Charles Manning. With the exception of Charles Manning, according to Myles's list, all these had ceased to take an active part in Methodist work before the Conference of 1753; and Charles Manning 'departed' in 1754. It must have been clear to John Wesley that the time was coming when he would not be able to rely on the clergy of the Church of England for help which had been most useful to him at the commencement of his mission.

There was one clergyman on whose help he had every reason to rely—his brother Charles; but he was absent from the Conference. His *Journal* is blank at this period, and so we are not able to state confidently the reasons for his absence. We know that Mrs. John Wesley was present in Leeds during the time when the Conference was being held, and we are aware that Charles Wesley had no wish to meet her. There was a time when he seemed to be seeking to obtain the blessing which belongs to the peacemaker, but he found that the task was beset with insurmountable difficulties. He abandoned it, and left his brother and Mrs. Wesley to arrange their differences without his interference. It was a wise decision. It is clear, however, that the failure of his 'plans of pacification' had left in his mind a wholesome dread of his sister-in-law.

As Charles Wesley has not given us the reasons for his absence from the Conference we are compelled to make another suggestion. It cannot be doubted that his relations with his brother were seriously strained. The reference to 'our friend' in John Wesley's letter to Blackwell is clear to those who are acquainted with the circumstances of the time. The heavier part of the burden of work was laid on John Wesley, and he wished that his brother should bear an equal load. In two letters which John Wesley wrote to him on October 20 and 31 we get an insight into their relations to each other at this time. He says:

> Take one side or the other. Either act readily in connexion with me, or never pretend it. Rather disclaim it; and openly avow you do and will not. By acting in connexion with me, I mean, take counsel

with me once or twice a year as to the places where you will labour. Hear my advice before you fix, whether you take it or no. At present you are so far from this that I do not even know when and where you intend to go. So far are you from following any advice of mine; nay, even from asking it. . . . You told William Briggs that you never declined going to any place because my wife was there. I am glad of it. If so, I have hope we may some time spend a little time together.[1]

With much on his mind, and in failing health, John Wesley resumed his work. We watch him with sympathy as he travels from place to place. Sometimes he rests for a few days because it is impossible for him to preach. Then he tries again, but his strength has departed from him. He gets back to London, consults Dr. Fothergill, receives some temporary relief, but once more is prostrated by his disease. On November 26 Dr. Fothergill told him that he must not stay in town a day longer. He advised him to try the country air, rest, drink asses' milk, and ride daily. About noon he took coach, as he could not ride, and came to Mr. Blackwell's house at Lewisham. Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell received him into their home, and he stayed there until the end of the year. In the evening of November 26, being uncertain as to whether he should die or live, he wrote out his own epitaph, in order 'to prevent vile panegyric.' It shows that he considered he was dying of 'a consumption.' Further, it contains a statement that, after his debts were paid, he did not leave ten pounds behind him. It surprises us that he should have to make this statement, but we remember how sensitive he was to the rumour of his considerable wealth.

We must leave John Wesley, slowly recovering under the care of his friends at Lewisham, and visit Bristol. On November 29 Lady Huntingdon and Mrs. Gallatin called at Charles Wesley's house. They told him of his brother's serious illness. The letters he had received had led him to believe that John Wesley was out of all danger; but Mrs. Gallatin brought news that alarmed him. On Saturday, December 1, he arrived in London; and the next day he rode to Lewisham, and found John Wesley with Mrs. Wesley, Mrs. Blackwell, and Mrs. Dewal. It was an affecting meeting. Charles Wesley was convinced that his brother would not recover. He was of opinion that he was far gone in 'a galloping consumption,'

[1] Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, ii. 172, 173.

just as their elder brother Samuel was at the same age. During this interview John Wesley tried to effect a reconciliation between his wife and his brother. He asked them to forget all that was past. Charles Wesley agreed to do so. He says, 'I once more offered her my service, in great sincerity. Neither will I suspect hers, but hope she will *do* as she says.' It must have been a relief to John Wesley to see his brother, as his anxiety concerning his work in London was removed. Charles Wesley at once took up that work, and learned a lesson that effectually banished any desire to be his brother's successor. After preaching at the Foundery on Sunday, December 2, he held a Society meeting in the evening. He says, 'I told the Society on Sunday night that I neither could nor would stand in my brother's place (if God took him to Himself); for I had neither a body, nor a mind, nor talents, nor grace for it.'[1]

Charles Wesley's stay in London was short. On Tuesday, December 4, he saw his brother again at Lewisham and had a long talk with him concerning 'all which had passed since his marriage.' The result of the conference was 'perfect harmony.' Then he had a conversation with Mrs. Blackwell and Mrs. Dewal. The subject was the value of inoculation as a preventive of small-pox. The ladies suggested that his wife might have been inoculated with her sister. He answered that he left every one to his own conscience, but, for his part, he looked upon it as taking the matter out of God's hands, and that he should choose, if it depended on him, to trust his wife entirely to God. In these days such an answer is astounding. Leaving Lewisham, he returned to the Foundery. Two letters from Lady Huntingdon were waiting for him. The first informed him that it was feared that his wife was 'taken ill of the small-pox'; the second confirmed the suspicion. He set off for Bristol, and found his wife very ill. Her friends Mrs. Vigor and Mrs. Jones were ministering to her day and night. Sister Burges was her nurse. Dr. Middleton had been a father to her; and Lady Huntingdon had attended to her constantly twice a day. It casts an extraordinary light on the condition of opinion in the eighteenth century when we find that the patient blessed God that she had not been inoculated, and had received the disease as immediately from Him. She recovered,

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 99.

but was disfigured for life. Her faith must have been sorely tried when her little boy died of small-pox on January 7, 1754. And so the clouds closed over the homes of the Wesleys in the last month of a trying year—a month that must have raised sad forebodings in the hearts of the Methodist people.

XX

'NOTES UPON THE NEW TESTAMENT'

In our book on *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* we caught sight of Alexander Pope as he crossed the old bridge in Bristol. We had to part company with him near the inner wall of the city, as Wesley was then going in a different direction; but now we must follow Pope, and watch him as he completes his journey from Bath. Having crossed the bridge he says: 'Passing still along by the river, you come to a rocky way on one side overlooking green hills on the other; on that rocky way rise several white houses, and over them red rocks; and as you go farther more rocks above rocks, mixed with green bushes and of different coloured stone. This at a mile's end terminates in the house of the Hot Well.' After noting 'several pretty lodging-houses, open to the river, with walls of trees,' he continues:

> When you have seen the hills which seem to shut in upon you and stop any further way, you go into the house [the pump-room], and looking out of the back-door a vast rock of an hundred feet of red, white, green, blue, and yellowish marble, all blotched and variegated, strikes you quite in the face, and turning on the left there opens the river at a vast depth below, winding in and out, and accompanied on both sides with a continued range of rocks up into the clouds, of a hundred colours one behind another . . . very much like the broken scenes in a play-house. Upon the top of those high rocks there runs a large down of fine turf for about three miles. It looks too frightful to approach the brink, and look down upon the river. . . . There is a little village upon this down called Clifton, where are very pretty lodging-houses, and steep cliffs and very green valleys. . . . I am told that one may ride ten miles farther on an even turf, on a ridge, that on one side views the river Severn.[1]

Such was the setting of the Old Hot Well in 1739, as it appeared to Alexander Pope. Those who know the neighbourhood will have little difficulty in re-creating the scene. In a few

[1] See Latimer's *Annals of Bristol*, 222, 223.

years after his visit the fame of the Hot Well rapidly spread. Latimer tells us that in 1743 it was in great repute. Large numbers of visitors flocked there; and it quickly became the scene of the revelries incident to a fashionable watering-place.

John Wesley had received much benefit from his retirement to Lewisham, but his doctor was not satisfied with his progress towards the recovery of his health. He was of opinion that a change of scene and treatment was necessary, and he recommended a visit to the Hot Well at Bristol. When we remember the sorrowful condition of his brother's home at the time we see that a lodging would have to be found elsewhere than in Charles Street. The friends in Bristol secured rooms for him in a house which stood at a short distance from the Well. On January 3, 1754, he and his wife arrived, and went to these rooms. The place of Wesley's lodging has not been identified. We must be content to know that he stayed there until March 10, 1754. From a letter he wrote to Ebenezer Blackwell we get a glimpse of his surroundings. Writing on January 5, he says:

> If I write to my best friends first, I must not delay writing to you, who have been the greatest instruments, in God's hands, of my recovery thus far. The journey hither did not weary me at all: but I now find the want of Lewisham air. We are (quite contrary to my judgement, but our friends here would have it so) in a cold, bleak place, and in a very cold house. If the Hotwell water make amends for this, it is well. Nor have I any place to ride but either by the river side, or over the downs, where the wind is ready to carry me away. However, one thing we know, that whatsoever is, is best.[1]

He soon settled down. After about a week one or two of his neighbours desired to join his little circle at family prayers; then a few more made the same request, so he had a small congregation every night. After a time he found himself strong enough to add 'a short exhortation,' and, gradually, prepared himself for the renewal of his life-work.

Wesley's shield against the attack of depression was work, and still more work. His mind and hand were soon busy. He determined to carry out a project over which he had brooded for several years. It concerned a commentary on *The New Testament*, which, he thought, would be of great service to his

[1] *Works*, xii. 165 8vo ed.

people. We cannot say when he first contemplated its production. It is probable that he was aware of an arrangement which existed in some of the reorganized Religious Societies of Dr. Woodward's time. In those societies, when a clergyman could not be present to conduct the services which were held in some of them a steward took his place. In the conversations which formed part of the proceedings questions concerning doctrine and the meaning of Scriptural statements were sometimes asked which the steward might not feel himself competent to answer. It was therefore directed that Dr. Hammond's *Exposition*, or some other book recommended by the minister who usually presided, should be obtained, in order that it might be consulted in case of perplexity or a difference of opinion on questions of doctrine and practice. At that time there were many Religious Societies that could not get a minister to preside over their meetings. In such cases it was of great importance that a book of appeal should lie on the table, and that time and temper should not be wasted in heated discussions. We suggest that it is possible that this arrangement influenced Wesley's action.[1]

We have seen that John Wesley reached his lodgings, near the Hot Well on January 3, and we know that on the next day he prepared a preface to a volume which was to bear the title *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament.*[2] It is essential we should understand that Wesley's first draft of a preface forms only a part of the preface that is printed in the first edition of the *Notes*, and in the copies published at the present time. This fact needs to be emphasized. It is of interest, not only to the Methodist antiquary, but to all who wish to understand the working of Wesley's mind when engaged on this important volume.

Under the care of Dr. Sharp, at the Wesleyan Conference Office, is an exceptionally interesting note-book. It is now entitled *John Wesley's MSS. Sermons and Introduction to the New Testament.* The book belongs to Wesley's Oxford days, and it reminds us of the meetings of the Holy Club. It seems to have been laid aside for some years. Then it was used in 1754 in connexion with Wesley's preparations for the *Notes on the New Testament.* We find in it, first of all, what may

[1] *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 18.

[2] We are indebted to Dr. J. Alfred Sharp for lending us his copy of the first edition of the *Notes*, and for much other valuable assistance.

be called a fair copy of the preface drafted on January 4. The fair copy, we note, is dated January 6, 1754, and it was written at 'Hot Wells, near Bristol.'

In March, 1914, we contributed an article on 'Mr. Wesley's *Notes upon the New Testament*' to the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society, and in it we gave a copy of the original preface. We can never forget the help we received at that time from Nehemiah Curnock, our old comrade in research. Among other things he sent us photographs of ten pages of the old note-book. If a 'companion' is one who shares his bread with another, then, so far as the bread of knowledge is concerned, we must say that the editor of John Wesley's *Journal* was one of the most 'companionable' men we have ever met. We will now give a copy of the original preface.

THE PREFACE

1. For many years I have had an earnest desire of writing something in order to help serious men, who have not the advantage of learning, more thoroughly to understand the New Testament. But I have been continually deterred from attempting anything of this kind, by a deep sense of my own inability. Of my want not only of learning sufficient for such a work, but much more of experience. This has often occasioned my quite laying aside the thought and when by much importunity I have been prevailed upon to resume it, still I determined to delay as long as possible, that (if it should please God) I might finish this work and my life together.

2. But having lately had a loud call from God, to arise and go hence, I am convinced that if I attempt anything of this kind at all, I must delay no longer: and I am the rather induced to do now what little I can, because I can do nothing else: being prevented by my present weakness, from either travelling or preaching. But blessed be God, I can still think, and read, and write. O that it may be to His glory!

3. It will be easily discerned, even from what I have said already, that I do not write for men of learning: much less for men of deep experience in the ways and work of God. I desire to sit at their feet, and to learn of them, if haply they may count me worthy of instruction. But I write for plain, unlettered men, who understand only their mother-tongue, and desire to save their souls.

4. In order to assist these, in such measure as I am able, I design first to set down the text itself in the common English translation, which in general is far the best that I have seen either in any ancient or modern language. Yet I do not say that it is incapable of being brought in some cases nearer to the original. Neither will I affirm that the Greek copies from which the translation was made are always the most correct. And therefore I shall take the liberty as occasion may

require to offer here and there a small alteration : though not taking upon me to dictate to any ; but simply to propose what appears to me either certain or probable.

5. To the text will be added, a few short explanatory notes : as few as possible ; it being not my view, to swell the book, but to contract it ; not to make it as large, but as small as I can : and as short as possible, that the comment may not obscure or swallow up the text. And these few short notes, will be explanatory only, not curious or critical: In pursuance of my great design, of making the Scripture more intelligible to the unlearned reader. Agreeably to this design, I shall (together with the common division into chapters and verses) divide the text all along, according to the matter it contains, after the manner of the great *Bengelius* : making a small, or a large pause, just as the sense requires. And even this is such a help in many places as one who has not tried it, would hardly conceive.

6. Those to whom I am chiefly indebted in the following work are Dr. Gell, the Oxford Divines, the late pious and learned Dr. Doddridge, and that great light of the world Bengelius. May the Father of Lights, the Giver of every good gift, open the eyes of our understanding, and cause the Light of the glorious gospel of His Son to shine in all our hearts !

This was the preface which Wesley intended to publish in his projected book. Having read it, we look at the big quarto volume that lies on our desk. It contains seven hundred and fifty-nine pages, with two and a half pages crowded with *errata*. As we turn over the leaves of the first edition we feel that the book does not answer to the description contained in the third, fourth, and fifth paragraphs of the original preface ; and we are convinced that Wesley must have changed his first design concerning the scope and character of the book. The needed light soon reaches us. In the first edition of the *Notes* we find the expanded preface, which contains twelve paragraphs. The first six sections, slightly altered, are taken from the original preface. Then come six new paragraphs of great interest.[1] Examining the first of the new paragraphs, we find the reason of Wesley's change of plan, and arrive at an understanding of the problem of the dual composition of the book.

In the seventh paragraph Wesley says :

I once designed to write down barely what occurred to my own mind, consulting none but the inspired writers. But no sooner was I acquainted with that great light of the Christian world (lately gone to his

[1] It must be noted that the date at the end of the expanded preface is January 4, 1754 ; that was when the original preface was written. It is somewhat misleading.

reward) Bengelius, than I entirely changed my design, being thoroughly convinced, it might be of more service to the cause of religion, were I barely to translate his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, than to write many volumes upon it. Many of his excellent notes I have therefore translated. Many more I have abridged, omitting that part which was purely critical, and giving the substance of the rest. Those various readings likewise which he had showed to have a vast majority of ancient copies and translations on their side, I have without scruple incorporated in the text: which after his manner I have divided all along (though not omitting the common division into chapters and verses, which is of use on various accounts) according to the matter it contains, making a larger or smaller pause. And even this is such a help in many places, as one who has not tried it can scarcely conceive.

The seventh paragraph marks the parting of the ways. In the next Wesley mentions other authors who have helped him, but he omits Dr. Gell and the Oxford divines, who have a place in the original preface. Having acknowledged his obligation to Bengel, he says:

I am likewise indebted for some useful observations to Dr. Heylyn's *Theological Lectures*: and for many more to Dr. Guyse, and to the *Family Expositor* of the late pious and learned Dr. Doddridge. It was a doubt with me for some time whether I should not subjoin to every Note I received from them, the name of the author from whom it was taken: especially considering I had transcribed some, and abridged many more, almost in the words of the author. But upon farther consideration, I resolved to name none, that nothing might divert the mind of the reader from keeping close to the point in view, and receiving what was spoke, only according to its own intrinsic value.

It is interesting to note the catholicity of Wesley's choice of helpers. Dr. Heylyn was a clergyman; Dr. Philip Doddridge and Dr. John Guyse were Dissenters.[1]

We must now turn from the preface, and fix our attention on John Wesley's principal helper, Johann Albrecht Bengel. He was born at Winnenden, in Würtemberg, on June 24, 1687, and died at Stuttgart on November 2, 1751. He has had many eulogists; we venture to think their number would have been increased if he had not endeavoured to explain the mysterious visions of the Book of the Revelation. He possessed an extraordinary capacity for work. It is said that the *Gnomon* was 'the fruit of twenty years' labour.' His *Erklärte*

[1] Dr. Doddridge died in Lisbon on October 26, 1751, and was interred in the burying-ground belonging to the British factory in that city; Dr. Guyse died on November 22, 1761, and was buried in Bunhill Fields, London.

Offenbarung,[1] mentioned by Wesley in his introduction to the Revelation, contains nearly twelve hundred pages. It is, according to him 'a full and regular comment on the Revelation.' There is no need to insist on the fact that Bengel was an abnormally industrious man. Dr. Rudolf Stier, in *The Words of the Lord Jesus*, admits us into the secret of Bengel's power. He speaks of his 'keen penetration into the Scripture.' That is the fitting phrase. It brings before us the miner pictured by that supreme artist the author of the Book of Job.[2] Many glide over the surface of books, others dig into them. The man who pauses when reading a book, and says, 'Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine,' does well; but he does better who breaks open a shaft, and cuts out channels among the rocks; who has eyes to see every precious thing, and who has power to bring the thing that was hidden to the light. Such a man was Bengel. We will add a later testimony. It is written by Dr. Fausset, who translated the *Gnomon* into English. Writing in 1857, he says:

> It is quite superfluous to write in praise of the *Gnomon* of Bengel. Ever since the year it was first published, A.D. 1742, up to the present time, it has been growing in estimation, and has been more and more widely circulated among the scholars of all countries. Though modern criticism has furnished many valuable additions to our materials for New Testament exegesis, yet in some respects Bengel stands out still *facile princeps* among all who have laboured, or who as yet labour, in that important field. He is unrivalled in felicitous brevity, combined with what seldom accompanies that excellence, namely, perspicuity. Terse, weighty and suggestive, he often, as a modern writer observes, 'condenses more matter into a line than can be extracted from pages of other writers.'[3]

We cannot point out the precise hour when John Wesley made his fortunate and final choice of Bengel as his principal guide, but we think it was at an early stage of his work in Bristol. The photographs of his MS. book show that on the page where the original preface ends, and the date January 6, 1754, appears, he has written the words: 'Notes upon the New Testament.' Then he begins by transcribing an extract from Bengel's address 'To the Christian Reader.' The preface was on his mind. It was clear that it must

[1] Wesley's misspelling of the title of this book still persists. [2] Job xxviii. 1–11.
[3] Fausset's English ed. of the *Gnomon*, i., Preface v.

be enlarged. With slight alteration Bengel's 'address' was transferred by Wesley to his *Notes upon the New Testament.* It appears in paragraphs ten to thirteen, and its authorship is rarely suspected. It is necessary to emphasize the fact that these paragraphs are borrowed from Bengel, as there are some expressions in them which are not in strict harmony with Wesley's own opinions. Our conviction concerning the time when Wesley adopted Bengel as his guide is strengthened by another fact. In the eleventh paragraph of the preface it is said that 'the chain of argument in each book is briefly exhibited in the table prefixt to it, which contains also the sum thereof, and may be of more use than prefixing the argument to each chapter, the division of the New Testament into chapters having been made in the dark ages, and very incorrectly; often separating things that are closely joined, and joining those that are entirely distinct from each other.' This is an extract from Bengel. Looking at Wesley's manuscript book again, we find that the Bengel method was at once adopted. Beginning the 'notes' on St. Matthew, Wesley copies Bengel's summary of the contents of the gospel from the *Gnomon,* making only slight alterations. His transcript fills five closely written pages of the note-book. If we compare the 'summaries' in Wesley's *Notes* with those in the *Gnomon* we shall find that they are almost invariably taken from Bengel. We think that Wesley must have hesitated to insert the 'short view' of the contents of the Book of the Revelation. It contains Bengel's prediction of the great events which he thought might happen in 1836. That prediction has been much misrepresented. Bengel did not say that the world would come to an end in that year, but that a new age would then commence under the conditions mentioned in the Book of the Revelation. That is a distinction which Wesley points out in a letter to Christopher Hopper, his sturdy and faithful assistant. It is certain that Wesley hesitated to accept Bengel's interpretations of the mysterious visions contained in the closing book of Scripture. That being the case we wonder why he put Bengel's short view of the whole contents of the Revelation at the end of his *Notes on the New Testament.*

We eagerly admit John Wesley's obligations to Bengel. That so large a number of the *Notes* are taken from him increases the value of Wesley's book. But we are not prepared

to accept the assertion that 'Wesley's work is to be regarded as little more than an abridged translation from Bengel.' That is a hasty judgement. It overlooks the statement in the seventh paragraph of the preface; and, if we may say so, it reveals the fact that the critic is not fully acquainted with the contents of Wesley's *Notes*. But the critic echoes a popular opinion. Some years ago we determined to test its correctness. We compared Wesley's *Notes* with the five volumes of Fausset's English edition of Bengel's *Gnomon*. It was not necessary to carry our comparison into the Book of the Revelation, for that is almost entirely Bengel's ground. The result of our investigation was that the principal notes in Wesley's book may be placed in three groups: (1) Notes selected from the *Gnomon*; (2) Notes written by Wesley; (3) Composite notes, i.e. notes taken from Bengel, but curtailed, extended, or corrected by Wesley. As we expected, the notes of the first class preponderated; but we were surprised to find that those contributed by Wesley were so numerous. It occurred to us that Wesley had made up his mind to write all the notes on subjects that concerned the doctrines which had emerged into prominence during the years of the Methodist revival. In our search we were soon able to say, 'There speaks Wesley!' Turning to the *Gnomon* we found we were right. The fact is that, in the second and third groups, 'our doctrines,' as we affectionately term them, receive full and distinct exposition. In addition, we found that Wesley often puts in a 'note' that arrests the attention of a reader who is interested in the progress of theological thought; and he sees, with no little surprise, that on some subjects Wesley was a theologian far in advance of his age. No man who has closely examined Wesley's *Notes* will accept the statement that they are 'little more than an abridged translation from Bengel.' They differ from the *Gnomon* in many places, and on very important points.

Let us watch John Wesley in Bristol at work on 'the Gospel.' He has reached the 'Sermon on the Mount.' He has consulted Bengel's translation of the text and his own copy of the Greek Testament.[1] And now Wesley begins to write his *Notes*.

[1] An important article on 'The Greek Text of Wesley's Translation of the New Testament,' written by the Rev. Dr. A. W. Harrison, appeared in the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society in March, 1914. Dr. Harrison also contributed to the *Proceedings* in 1922, an article on 'Gambold's Edition of the Greek Testament, 1742.' Both atricles abound in interest. See *W.H.S. Proceedings*, ix. 105, xiii. 103.

As we read them to-day we seem to be familiar with them. They do not suggest Bengel to us. We glance at the table at which Wesley is sitting and see volumes well known to the Methodist antiquary. The mystery is solved. The 'notes' on St. Matthew v.–vii. are almost all taken from Wesley's 'Discourses' on the Sermon on the Mount. That is one illustration of the fact that Wesley, while ready to confess his obligation to Bengel, was not a mere copyist, but, when preparing his *Notes upon the New Testament*, bore a large share of the expositor's burden.

For some time John Wesley carried on his work alone. At the end of January his wife was summoned to London to see her dying child. A few days after her arrival her son passed away. Charles Wesley's *Journal* at this time is blank, but from another source we find that on February 27 he came from London. He soon visited his brother at his lodging, and assisted him in his work. John Wesley says: 'We spent several days together in comparing the translation of the Evangelists with the original, and reading Dr. Heylyn's *Lectures* and Dr. Doddridge's *Family Expositor*.' Later when the rough draft of the Gospels was finished, Charles Wesley, at intervals, assisted his brother in writing out the fair copy for the Press. It is pleasant to see this renewal of their comradeship. As they worked together they may have thought of the little group that began to meet together at Oxford, in November, 1729, for the purpose of reading the Latin and Greek classics, and 'especially the Greek Testament'—the little group that formed the nucleus of the 'Holy Club.' It is still more probable that as John Wesley availed himself of the results of Bengel's labours he began to see a deeper meaning in his association with the Germans of Savannah. It was in his exile that he learned to read and speak their language. The path he struck in the wilds of Georgia led him to the treasure-house of Bengel's wisdom.

XXI

NORWICH

On one of his voyages from Ireland John Wesley read Pascal's *Thoughts on Religion*—that spacious harvest-field in which reapers and gleaners may work together. We wonder if his eye rested on these words: 'When a soldier or a labourer complains of his toils, let him be set to do nothing.' We can imagine how his eyes would brighten when he read this sentence. The luxury of idleness had no charms for him; to be 'set to do nothing' would have been an acute form of misery. And yet, as we have watched him working continuously at the Old Hot Well, we have not been able to repress the thought that it would have been well if he had resisted for a time that craving for hard work which possessed him to the end of his life. His visit to some extent answered its purpose, but his health was not re-established. Having devoted much time to the 'notes' on the Gospels, he left the Well on Sunday, March 10, and removed to Bristol. He confesses that he had not strength for his ordinary work among the Societies, but he thought he had sufficient to be of some service to his people. He seems to have 'rested' for a few days, being busy with the 'fair copy' of the Gospels; but on Tuesday, March 26, he preached for the first time after an intermission of four months. His attempt to resume this part of his work filled him with gratitude. He says in his *Journal*: 'What reason have I to praise God that He does not take the word of His truth utterly out of my mouth!'

During this visit to Bristol an event occurred of exceptional importance. We have mentioned the opinion of Canon Overton concerning the slight impression made on the Church of England by the Methodist Revival.[1] There is considerable truth in his view; but it fails to emphasize the fact of John Wesley's influence over the men who became the founders

[1] See *ante*, 150;

of the Evangelical Party in that Church. It was at the period we have reached, when the Wesleys were practically excluded from the churches, that men whose names now stand high in the esteem of all who care for the religious condition of this country began their quiet work in congregations that would not have listened with patience to the preaching of a 'Methodist' clergyman. The name of Henry Venn is familiar to us all. He was a Cambridge man. From 1754 to 1759 he was curate of the village of Clapham, near London. Mr. Balleine, in his excellent book on *The Evangelical Party in the Church of England*, says that during Venn's Clapham curacy he rode into London four times a week to lecture at St. Antholin's; St. Alban's, Wood Street; and St. Swithin's, London Stone. The mention of St. Antholin's arrests us. It is the church in which John Wesley once preached—it was afterwards closed against him—and in which Charles Wesley preached by the gracious permission of the clerk after he had been informed that 'Dr. Venn had forbidden any Methodist to preach in the church.'[1] Now let us straighten the ravelled threads. Mr. Balleine tells us that, on going to Clapham, Henry Venn wrote to John Wesley for advice. He does not quote his letter; but, fortunately, Tyerman has preserved it. It is as follows:

London, March 21, 1754.

DEAR SIR,

As I have often experienced your words to be as thunder to my drowsy soul, I presume, though a stranger, to become a petitioner, begging you would send me a personal charge, to take heed to feed the flock committed to me. If you consider the various snares to which a curate is exposed—either to palliate the doctrines of the gospel, or to make treacherous allowances to the rich and great, or, at least, to sit down satisfied with doing the least, more than the best, among the idle shepherds—you will not, I hope, condemn this letter, as impertinently interrupting you in your noble employment, or think one hour lost in complying with its request. It is the request of one, who though he differs from you, and possibly ever may in some points, yet must ever acknowledge the benefit and light he has received from your works and preaching; and, therefore, is bound to thank the Lord of the harvest for sending a labourer among us, so much endued with the spirit and power of Elias; and to pray for your long continuance among us, to encourage me and my brethren, by your example, while you edify us by your writings. I am, Sir, your feeble brother in Christ,

HENRY VENN.[2]

[1] Both events occurred in 1738. See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 183, 233.

[2] Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 186.

About the time when Henry Venn wrote this letter, Samuel Furly, a friend of Venn's who was at Cambridge, sent a letter to Wesley asking for his advice. He became a clergyman. In 1766 John Thornton, the well-known member of the 'Clapham Sect,' presented him to the living of Roche. He was a strong evangelical preacher, who has been described as 'rather a Boanerges than a Barnabas.' A letter in reply to his request, dated Bristol, March 30, 1754, appears in Tyerman's *Life of Wesley* in close connexion with the answer to Henry Venn's appeal for advice. It must have encouraged Wesley in the time of his weariness to find that his example and teaching had deeply affected these young men. And so Wesley's influence began to touch men who afterwards became famous for their evangelizing work in the Church of England.

On April 1 John Wesley, with his wife, set out for London, reaching the Foundery the next day. Having settled business matters, Wesley retired to Paddington, where he spent some weeks in writing, only going to town on Saturday evenings and returning on Monday. He sought to recruit his strength by walking in that once rural neighbourhood. He paced the roads and lanes book in hand. We catch sight of him in his rambles. His eyes are fixed on Dr. Calamy's *Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's History of his Life and Times*. He studied it closely. His indignation was stirred. This is what he says of it: 'What a scene is opened here! In spite of all the prejudices of education, I could not but see that the poor Nonconformists had been used without either justice or mercy, and that many of the Protestant Bishops of King Charles had neither more religion nor humanity than the Popish Bishops of Queen Mary.' The storms of persecution which had beaten on him and his people had sharpened his insight. He saw more clearly the days of suffering through which his great-grandfather, his grandfather and Dr. Annesley had passed, and the latent Nonconformist in him began to assert itself.

John Wesley's weekly visits to the Foundery sometimes revealed difficulties which he had insufficient strength to manage. In our description of the proceedings of the Leeds Conference of 1753 we referred to the case of John Edwards, and commented on Wesley's difficulties arising from the lack of competent lay preachers.[1] He soon found that the problems

[1] See

which had troubled him were unsolved. It was clear that some of his lay preachers were about to abandon him. On Sunday April 21, he preached at Spitalfields. On that day he met Charles Skelton, a man whom he highly valued. At their interview, Skelton told him that he intended to go to Bury and settle there. There is a tone of weariness in Wesley's note of the interview: 'Finding he was fully determined, I said nothing against it. So we parted civilly.' All that we know of Skelton increases our regret at his 'departure from the work.' He had been a lay preacher since 1749, and had met with much success. Charles Atmore, in reviewing his case, confesses that he could not determine the reason why he left the Methodists. All that he can say in explanation is that 'as in those days, particularly, the labour was hard, the journeys long, and the accommodations very mean, he grew weary of this kind of life; and an opportunity offering of his settling, he gladly embraced it.' He became the minister of a small independent chapel in Southwark. We think he was a Dissenter by conviction, as were others of the lay preachers. In after years John Wesley, who watched his career, was moved to say, 'Did God design that this light should be hid under a bushel? In a little, obscure, Dissenting meeting-house?' His ministry there was a failure. His congregation dwindled to nothing. He gave up the ministry and died.[1]

John Wesley held a Conference in London which commenced on Wednesday, May 22. We regret that the record of its proceedings is so meagre. Wesley's report is as follows: 'Our Conference began, and the spirit of peace and love was in the midst of us. Before we parted we all willingly signed an agreement not to act independently on each other; so that the breach lately made has only united us more closely together than ever.'[2] This report excites but does not satisfy our curiosity. It is clear that 'conversations' on important matters took place; but it needs much practice in the fine art of reading the well-nigh inscrutable to detect the subjects discussed.

If we had a list of those who attended the Conference we might venture to indicate subjects which might arise. But no complete list exists. However, we are not left entirely in the dark. In the *Methodist Magazine* for 1855 there is a

[1] Atmore's *Methodist Memorial*, 387. [2] *Journal*, iv. 94.

copy, from John Wesley's manuscripts, of the plan of the appointments of the preachers for the week beginning May 20, 1754. It is reproduced in Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*. Some have supposed that it is 'the first circuit plan.' But that is a mistake. It is, so far as we know, one of the earliest plans showing the appointments of the preachers when attending a Conference. It is therefore an interesting document. It gives a clear view of the London circuit in 1754. The Foundery and the Chapel in West Street, Seven Dials, are prominent. The preaching-houses in Spitalfields, Snowsfields, Wapping, Westminster and Deptford are included. The list closes with the name of a new centre. At the head of the column containing the appointments the word 'Wells' stands. The annotator of the plan in the *Methodist Magazine* for 1855 explains that Sadler's Wells is meant, and Tyerman accepts that statement. But in a note the editor of John Wesley's standard *Journal* saves us from confusion. The building indicated in the Conference plan was not the old Sadler's Wells theatre, but a new place of entertainment which stood at some distance from it in what is now Lower Rosoman Street. The *Gentleman's Magazine* of May, 1752, reports as follows: 'The theatrical edifice called the New Wells, near the London Spaw, was preached in [on May 17] for the first time by a clergyman Methodist, it being taken by the Rev. John Wesley for a tabernacle.' It had been closed since 1750. Sadler's Wells was in continuous use as a place of entertainment throughout the eighteenth century.[1]

From the list of appointments it is possible to find out the names of some of those who attended the Conference in London. Wesley's abbreviation of names in the plan makes positive identification difficult, but we can say with certainty that the following preachers were present: John and Charles Wesley, Joseph Cownley, John Edwards, John Fenwick, Christopher Hopper, Thomas Mitchell, Charles Perronet, Jacob Rowell, Robert Swindells, and Thomas Walsh. It is probable that John Haime was also present; but it has been suggested that 'Jo. Ha.,' in the plan, may indicate him, or John Haughton, or John Hampson. With these names before us can we get light on Wesley's reference to 'the breach already made.' If 'Jo. Ha.' stands for John Haime, we may at once say that, with

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 93 *note*.

a solitary exception, all the men whose names we have just recorded 'died in the work.' The exception is John Edwards, whose conduct in Leeds we have already described. We expect that a discussion arose in the Conference on his proceedings; that he answered for himself; and that his conduct was strongly condemned. The danger of his example was perceived, and the loyal men who were present willingly signed the agreement to which Wesley refers. It is probable that the departure of Charles Skelton and other men who had become Dissenting ministers influenced the Conference. When trying to trace the origin of the practice of signing 'agreements' 'in the Conference,' it is possible that we have discovered it.

On Whit-Sunday, June 2, John Wesley preached in the evening at the Foundery. It was an experiment, and it convinced him that he had not recovered his whole voice or strength. He says, 'Perhaps I never may. But let me use what I have.' In these days of feebleness a message came to him from his old friends Captain and Mrs. Gallatin asking him to visit them at Lakenham, a hamlet a mile and a half south of Norwich. He set out from London on horseback, Charles Wesley, Charles Perronet, and Mr. Robert Windsor, a highly esteemed member of the Foundery Society, being his travelling companions. They reached Lakenham in the evening of July 10, and were welcomed by the Captain and his wife. From Captain Gallatin they heard a story concerning James Wheatley which showed their coming was well timed. After his exclusion from the ranks of the Methodist preachers he had come to Norwich, and with great courage he had commenced to preach in the open air. He continued to do so in spite of furious opposition. His work was so successful that the Society he had gathered together built for him a preaching-house known as the Tabernacle. It was soon filled with an enthusiastic congregation. It appeared as if Wheatley had recovered himself, and that a life of great usefulness was before him. But the old weakness once more led him astray. On the arrival of the Wesleys at Lakenham Captain Gallatin brought them the news that the whole city was in an uproar about Wheatley, whose 'works of darkness had been brought to light.' The people of Norwich were so scandalized and exasperated that they were ready to rise and tear him to

pieces. The Captain seems to have mentioned the fact of the expected arrival of the Wesleys, and had found that 'the clergy were not forward to show their friendly inclination towards them.' One of them, however, had sent a message excusing himself for not visiting them 'until the tumult was over.'

On July 11 Captain Gallatin dined with the Mayor of Norwich, who, according to Charles Wesley, was a wise and resolute man. His wisdom and resolution were tempered with caution, as he greatly feared the rising of the people. The streets were ringing all day with the stories of Wheatley's wickedness. From morning to night the mayor had been employed in taking the affidavits of women whom Wheatley had tried 'to corrupt.' These accounts were printed and carried about the city. It appears that during the previous year an advertisement had been printed in Norwich by the Wesleys disclaiming their connexion with Wheatley. It had done much good. Its effect was strengthened by Captain Gallatin's assurance, in his interview with the mayor, that Wheatley was no Methodist or associate of the Wesleys. As the days went by, the clergy, as well as the people in general, were sensible, according to Charles Wesley, of 'our inviolable attachment to the Church.' Waiting for the subsidence of the disturbance, the Wesleys, in their retreat, continued transcribing the *Notes upon the New Testament*. But many in the city were anxious to hear them preach. On July 16 a Norwich lady sent John Wesley an invitation to preach in her great room; he was to stand at the window so that those outside might hear. But, an alderman having threatened to prosecute her, she drew back; and Charles Wesley had to hurry to Lakenham to stop his brother. The rest of the day was spent in 'transcribing.' On July 18 word was brought to the Wesleys that 'the gentlemen were much displeased with their disappointment,' so John and Charles Wesley went to Norwich, where Charles Wesley preached in the evening. John Wesley says, 'Being a little recovered from the illness which had attended me for several days, after my brother had done I spoke to the congregation for a few minutes, and promised to see them again, if God should restore my strength, at the first opportunity.' It is a pathetic entry. Those who watched him at this time saw that he was unfit to bear the strain and trouble of these turbulent

times. On the day after he had spoken the few confirmatory words in Norwich we see him taking his departure from Lakenham. Charles Perronet, who had persuaded him to return to Bristol, is with him. He is going back to the Hot Wells, his brother being convinced that the only probable means of restoring his health was to be found in that place.

Leaving Charles Wesley in Norwich for a short time, we follow John Wesley as he rides towards the south. On his way to London he passed through Bedford; and on Sunday, July 21, he preached there, near St. Peter's Green. It was the first open-air service he had held for several months. The next day he reached London, where he stayed for a short time. We expected him to go to Bristol at once. But he lingered. He preached at the Foundery on July 30; and on August 5 he set out for Canterbury. On the journey he read a book which made a deep impression on him. Once more he came under the influence of Richard Baxter. In Calamy's 'Abridgement' of Baxter's *History of his Life and Times* there is a long list of his 'Works and Writings.' When we examine it we find that he had paid great attention to the history of the Early Church, and especially to its Councils. In 1659 he published his *Key for Catholicks*, which, in its second part, deals with the question of General Councils. After considering the subject for several years, in 1680 his *Church History of the Government of Bishops and their Councils* appeared. It was supplemented in 1682 by a book which enlarged and defended his *History of Councils*. In the opinion of Dr. Barrow, Baxter's 'practical writings were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom confuted.' In the opinion of the annotator of John Wesley's *Journal* the book that was read by him on his way to Canterbury was the Baxter volume published in 1680. Wesley looked upon it as containing a clear and reliable statement of facts. This was his conclusion when he had studied the book: 'It is utterly astonishing, and would be wholly incredible but that his vouchers are beyond all exception. . . . How has one Council been perpetually cursing another, and delivering over to Satan, whether predecessors or contemporaries, who did not implicitly receive their determination, though generally trifling, sometimes false, and frequently unintelligible or self-contradictory! Surely Mahometanism was let loose to reform the Christians! I know not but

Constantinople has gained by the change.'[1] We quote this sweeping judgement to show that while Wesley was an enthusiastic admirer of the Early Church, his enthusiasm for the rulers of the Church, 'almost in every age after St. Cyprian,' was limited. When a man applies the touchstone of the New Testament to questions of Church government he discovers some things that incline him to think that Baxter and Wesley were not altogether wrong in their criticisms. So far as John Wesley was concerned, his ever-increasing knowledge of ecclesiastical history broadened his outlook, and led him to take a more charitable view of Christian people who had found themselves compelled to fight the battles of Nonconformity.

After preaching in Canterbury, Wesley felt himself in the grip of his old physical disorder. He hastened back to London, consulted Dr. Fothergill, and was advised to return to the Bristol Hot Well without delay. He obeyed the direction. Reaching Bristol, he must have found the 'season' was at its height at the Old Well, and he could not bear the noise and hurry of that place. There was another 'well' farther down the river, close by the ravine where the persecuted Nonconformists used to meet in the dismal days of Charles the Second. The well was known as the New Hot Well. The house stood in a neighbourhood that had grim associations, for near it a gibbet once stood. That had been removed, so the clank of chains no longer came on the night winds. Wesley took a lodging at the New Hot Well on Wednesday, August 14. He drank the water late in the evening and early in the morning. But misfortune dogged his footsteps. The day after his arrival at the New Well an accident occurred. He says, 'But my course of physic was near being cut short by a large stone which was hung up as the weight of a jack. I applied to my head cloths dipped in cold water, which presently stopped the bleeding, and so abated the swelling that in a few hours I found no further inconvenience.' He seems to treat the matter lightly, but there is no entry in his *Journal* for more than a fortnight; there is no doubt the accident was severe. However, he preached now and then. On Saturday, August 31, he preached in Weavers' Hall once more. In October, 1751, the old place, so full of memories of the early days of Methodism,

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 97.

was leased by 'the Worshipfull the Company of Weavers to John Dyer, John Sprage, Daniel Jenkins, and Robert Willway, stewards of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Society, of and for the use of the said Mr. John Wesley and his Society.'[1] The old hall stood on the Somerset side of the river, and was a convenient place of meeting for Bedminster people and others. Modern improvements have resulted in the destruction of Weavers' Hall.

Leaving John Wesley for a time in Bristol, we must return to Norwich and watch the progress of events in that city. On our eastward journey we have much to ponder. At the close of the seventeenth century Norwich occupied the second place among the cities of England. When the Wesleys visited it Bristol had deprived it of that distinguished position. Looking back to an earlier time, we see that when the Reformation began to rouse men from their lethargy East Anglia was among the first districts to welcome the new light. At the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, held in Norwich in July, 1847, a paper was read by one of the members 'on the part taken by Norfolk and Suffolk in the Reformation.' The name of the reader will ever be saluted with respect. He was then a young man who had come under the influence of Dr. Arnold at Rugby, and possessed much of his master's breadth of view and charitable spirit. It will be enough to say that his name was Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.[2] What did he say about East Anglia and the Reformation?

It has been often remarked that the Reformation in England did not become the popular cause throughout the country till after the indignation excited against the opposite party by the fires of Smithfield. London indeed, and possibly some other of the great towns, were strongly Protestant, but the country at large during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI was either apathetic or hostile. Such, however, was not the case with East Anglia. In spite of the strong counter-influence of the powerful duke of Norfolk, and the excessive severity of Nix, the last Roman Catholic bishop of Norwich, we find that the middle and even the lower classes of Norfolk, Suffolk, and we may add Cambridgeshire, took up the cause of the Reformation with a vehemence which stands alone in the annals of the period. . . .

It is needless to go through the proofs of this fact in detail. The

[1] See copy of the lease in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, ix. 195–196.

[2] It is well known that it was largely through Dean Stanley's influence that the monument to the Wesleys was placed in Westminster Abbey.

Lollards' Pit may still be seen, where in the hollow under the steep ascent which was then crowned with St. Leonard's Priory, the sufferers were burnt at the stake, in the presence of the crowds who assembled on the hills around, which, we are told, thus served as a natural amphitheatre, for the spectators to witness the dreadful spectacle. The names of Bilney, Bale, and Parker, so closely bound up with the early history of English Protestantism, are no less closely linked with the local associations of East Anglia. Bilney was a preacher in Suffolk, endured imprisonment under the present guildhall of Norwich, and suffered on the spot just mentioned. Bale had been a member of the great monastery of the Carmelites, or Whitefriars, which stood near the church of St. James in Pockthorpe. Parker, was born in the parish of St. Saviour's, in the churchyard of which the tomb of his parents still remains, and has commemorated his birthplace by the Norfolk fellowships which he founded in his favourite college of Corpus Christi. And the well-known advocacy of the reforming principles by Cambridge—then doubtless, as now, the favourite university of East Anglia, is no slight indication in the same direction—Cambridge, as it has been more than once observed, 'having had the honour of educating those illustrious men, whom Oxford had the honour of burning.'[1]

In the volume which contains the paper from which we have just quoted there is a valuable contribution from the pen of Mr. John Henry Parker, of Oxford. It is entitled 'Architectural Notes of the Churches and other Buildings in the City and neighbourhood of Norwich.' Examining it, we find that when the Wesleys visited Norwich, in addition to the cathedral there were at least thirty churches in or near the city. Those who visit Norwich at the present time know that in it old churches abound. Up to 1754 the Wesleys seem to have avoided the city. It is probable that they were influenced by their rule, 'Go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most.' Why, then, did they visit Norwich at this time? The answer is that they went there at the call of Captain and Mrs. Gallatin, who were distressed at the condition of things produced by the conduct of James Wheatley and the outrages committed by the mob. There can be no doubt that the preaching of the evangelical doctrines by Wheatley during the time of his recovered stability had made a great impression on the people of Norwich. Then came his moral failure, which produced a disastrous effect. It threatened to bring into disrepute the doctrines he had preached. It is no wonder that Captain Gallatin and his wife came

[1] *Proceedings of the Archaeological Institute*, 1847, 60–61.

to the conclusion that a crisis had arisen which could only be met by the coming of the Wesleys. They were men of high character; they had revived the teaching of evangelical doctrines in many cities, towns and villages throughout the country; and the success that had marked their course elsewhere might attend their ministry in Norwich. Such is our own explanation of the visit of the Wesleys.

When John Wesley left Lakenham, after his visit, Charles Wesley continued the work of preaching in Norwich. He went to the cathedral regularly, and on two occasions received the sacrament from the bishop's hands. Once, when he was preaching in the street, among the multitude stood nine clergymen and three Justices of the Peace. It was clear that, so far as the Church of England was concerned, his presence was not resented. It was a rainy season, and it became necessary to obtain some place where the crowd could meet. On Saturday, July 20, Charles Wesley had an interview with Mr. Edwards, a Justice of the Peace, who had an old, large brewhouse to let. He had refused several offers for it, always declaring 'he would let it to none but Mr. John Wesley.' The result of the interview was that Mr. Edwards let it on a lease for seven years. On Monday the workmen began to put it into repair. When Charles Wesley saw the place he must have been tempted to rue his bargain. It was a mere heap of rubbish, without walls, without roof, floor, doors, or windows. He was not so accustomed as his brother to the work of building preaching-houses. We do not wonder that he cried, 'What will this chaos produce?' Then, when he learned that the 'brewhouse' had been originally a 'foundery,' he thought the fact was 'no bad omen.'

A Methodist Society consisting of eighteen members was formed. Following Charles Wesley's record of this fact, we find the whole tone of his *Journal* seems to change. The followers of James Wheatley began to trouble him, and the mob disturbed his services. These were ordinary experiences; but a greater hindrance to his work was at hand. On Tuesday, July 30, he went to St. Peter's and heard 'a very innocent sermon on public worship'; he records, with satisfaction, 'there is no railing at present in any of the churches.' But ominous sounds were heard all that day in the streets of Norwich. We have already dealt with the unsavoury subject of

the Bishop of Exeter's charge of lewd conduct against John Wesley and we have seen how that charge had found its way to York. It was absolutely false, but it was suited to the purposes of the enemies of Methodism. Now 'the Bishop of Exeter's letter' was being scattered among the people of Norwich. Thomas Jackson, the editor of Charles Wesley's *Journal*, in a note suggests that the 'idle tale' was republished by a Norwich clergyman who got it printed in the city. Charles Wesley's comment on 'the charge' is, 'It is too gross to pass even at Norwich. The clergy, I hear, declare they are satisfied of Mr. John Wesley's unexceptionable character; and the generality of the people are much displeased at the nonsensical tale.'[1]

The clergy and the more intelligent people of the city dismissed the Bishop of Exeter's charge from their minds, but it delighted the mob. The remainder of Charles Wesley's stay was marked by serious outbreaks. But he continued to preach to large congregations. Gradually the Foundery arose from its ruins and became habitable. The Society began to meet in it; then it was made ready for the large congregation. On Monday, August 12, the 'House' was crowded within and without. The time had come when Charles Wesley had to say farewell. Notwithstanding all opposition, his mission had been successful. As he rode away from Norwich he must have rejoiced in the conviction that the pleasure of the Lord had prospered in his hand.

At this point we lose sight of Charles Wesley for a time. In his *Journal* there are no records from August 13, 1754, to September 16, 1756. It must be remembered that his *Journal* has survived many perils. The MS. was purchased of Charles Wesley, his son, the famous musician. A little time before it was bought from him it had been found among some loose straw on the floor of a public warehouse in London where furniture had been stored. When examined it showed signs of mutilation. Thomas Jackson, in his interesting Introduction to *The Journal of Charles Wesley*, says, 'He appears to have written it, from day to day, upon loose sheets of paper, and to have transmitted large portions of it to his wife and friends in the form of letters, some of which have been preserved. Much of it, there is reason to believe, he himself destroyed;

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 106.

and it is probable that much more of it has long since perished, through the carelessness of the persons to whom it was transmitted. That which is now published, and which is all that is known to exist, was transcribed with great neatness and accuracy, by the venerable author himself, carefully paged, and was bound in a thick octavo volume.' When this volume was rescued from the litter of the warehouse it was found that several leaves had been cut from the binding, and yet not removed. In the presence of these facts we cease to wonder that, at several points when Charles Wesley could have assisted us to understand difficult problems, his *Journal* is searched in vain for information.[1]

At this time also John Wesley's *Journal* gives us only slight assistance. The entries cease after October 28, 1754, and are not resumed until February 16, 1755. Making use of the light we possess, we see that John Wesley spent some days in September in the West of England. He preached at Plymouth Dock in a newly erected 'Room.' On September 17 he rode from Bristol to Trowbridge. He went there to open a new preaching-house. It had been built, or purchased, by a man 'who had found peace with God while he was a soldier in Flanders.' He had prospered in business since his discharge, and felt that he must show his gratitude to God by this gift to His people. His name was Laurence Oliphant. He strongly desired that John Wesley should be the first to preach in the new 'house.' Wesley could not resist his appeal. He was weary with his journey to Devon and Cornwall, but he mounted his horse and went on his way. The 'House' was situated in Waldron Square, Frog Lane.[2] He began his service. The people had crowded to hear him. He gave out the first hymn. He could bear the heat no longer, so went to the door, stood there, and preached to 'a multitude of hearers, rich and poor.' When, later in the week, he returned to Bristol he found that his voice was failing. But he held a watch-night, which he had not done for eleven months. The next evening, after preaching at Weavers' Hall, his voice entirely failed.

It is a relief to find John Wesley once more in London, especially as we see that on October 7 he retired to an old

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i. Intro. iv.–v.

[2] In the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society there is a picture of the house after it had been made into an ordinary dwelling-house. *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vi. 101.

manor house and palace of the Bishops of London. Bishop Bonner had once resided there, and it still bore his name. Wesley describes it as ' a little place near Hackney.'[1] He gives a description of his retreat that provokes envy. He says, ' Here I was as in a college. Twice a day we joined in prayer. The rest of the day, allowing about an hour for meals, and another for walking before dinner and supper, I spent quietly in my study.' He was busy with the *Notes upon the New Testament*. We see him at his desk, sitting in the palace once occupied by Bonner, a successor of Tunstall, that Bishop of London whose voice we seem to have heard at Paul's Cross denouncing Tindale's translation of the New Testament. His harangue was effective ; as witness, the throwing of Tindale's books into the fire kindled in St. Paul's churchyard. The picture of Wesley in Bonner's old home peacefully writing his *Notes upon the New Testament*, makes a strong appeal to the imagination of a man who is sensitive to the charm of historical contrasts.

[1] In a note the editor of John Wesley's *Journal* says that the palace stood on part of the site of the present Victoria Park Chest Hospital, not far from the Children's Home buildings in Bonner Road.

XXII

A MEMORABLE CONFERENCE

On April 9, 1755, John Wesley was in Manchester. He remained there for five days, preaching and caring for the Society, and finding time to continue his work on the *Notes upon the New Testament*. On April 14 he left and went to Liverpool, a place in the Manchester 'round.' It was his first visit. When he was a boy the population of Liverpool was about eight thousand; at the time of his visit it was eighteen thousand five hundred. He was much impressed by its appearance and by the manners of its people. He thought that in forty years more it would become nearly equal to Bristol. The prosperity of Bristol was not altogether unconnected with the slave trade, and Liverpool was also engaged in that lucrative traffic. Wesley's description of Liverpool and its inhabitants makes a pleasant picture—'It is one of the neatest, best built towns I have seen in England. I think it is full twice as large as Chester. Most of the streets are quite straight. Two-thirds of the town, we were informed, have been added within these forty years. . . . The people in general are the most mild and courteous I ever saw in a sea-port town, as indeed appears by their friendly behaviour, not only to the Jews and Papists, but even to the Methodists.'

In the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society the Rev. Frederick M. Parkinson has given interesting particulars concerning early Methodism in Liverpool. It is difficult to speak of its introduction with precision; but we know that a little Society was gathered together which met in 'a small, dingy, and inconvenient room in Cable Street.' We cannot say when this room was taken, nor how long it was occupied: but before Wesley's visit a piece of ground had been purchased in Pitt Street, and a preaching-house had been erected on it. Mr. Parkinson points out that in Gore's *Directory* it is stated that on May 7, 1754, the building was 'recorded' as 'a meeting-house

for Dissenters.' That is a valuable piece of information. We have alluded to the fact that the newly built 'House' in Bristol had been similarly 'recorded' under the provisions of the Toleration Act. We have no wish to diminish the force of the compliment Wesley paid to the people of Liverpool, but the mildness and courtesy displayed to the Methodists may have arisen, in some of them, because the Pitt Street 'House' was under the protection of the law.[1] Wesley describes the building as 'little larger than that at Newcastle.' He preached in it in the evening of the day of his arrival to a large congregation, and then every morning and evening during his stay, abundance of people gladly attending the services. He was told that many of them were 'dear lovers of controversy'; but, he says, 'I had better work. I pressed upon them all repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' At his last service, on Sunday evening, April 20, he preached, and afterwards explained the 'Rules of the Society,' and strongly exhorted the members to adorn their profession by all holiness of conversation.

After visiting Liverpool Wesley stayed for a few days in Bolton. He found that the number of the members of the Society was a little reduced. 'The sons of strife' were on every side, but his words of encouragement inspirited the little flock. He left the Bolton Methodists 'holding on their way, looking straight to the prize of their high calling.' Leaving Bolton, he spent some days in visiting the Yorkshire Societies. During this time his mind was occupied with serious thoughts concerning the Conference that had been summoned to meet in Leeds on May 6. He was conscious of the exceptional importance of the subjects that would have to be discussed; he prepared himself for their consideration, and hoped for their settlement.

Wesley's prolonged illness was a serious test of the stability of the Methodist Societies. We have watched them and have wondered at the way in which that test was borne. A man who holds the theory of Wesley's 'autocracy' is bewildered by the spectacle of the steady progress of the Societies during this trying time. We have no respect for that theory. Those who hold it overlook the fact that Wesley's constant aim was to share the power he undoubtedly possessed, with lay preachers,

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, i. 106.

leaders, stewards, trustees, and other reliable officers of the Societies. It is true that he was ' the final authority ' in cases of local dispute ; but no one who has followed our descriptions of the Conferences he held will fail to see the freedom of discussion that characterized ' the conversations,' and the manner in which Wesley afterwards carried out their decisions. When trying to discover the reason of the progress of the Societies during his illness, we add to the forces we have mentioned another which, in some respects, was more mighty than any of them. The Societies were kept together, and flourished at this period, by the loyalty and enthusiasm of their members. The members had joined the Societies by an act of their own free will, and had the right to leave them when they pleased. But the mass of them had gone through a spiritual experience that had opened their eyes to the supreme importance of Christian fellowship. They valued the truth of the doctrines that had been brought to light by the Methodist preachers. They rejoiced in the change the preaching had effected in themselves, their families, and in the lives and homes of their neighbours. They valued the renewal of strength which came to them week by week, in their class-meeting, and in the warm-hearted services in the preaching-house. They reverenced and loved John Wesley. In his absence they found a strong reason for an increase of their loyalty ; they stood firm to their allegiance, hoping for the coming of the day when they would see his face once more. We may dismiss our fears concerning the stability of the Societies, but we cannot close our eyes to the dangers which revealed themselves at the approaching Leeds Conference. We have already noted the disappearance of friendly clergymen and the loss of valued lay preachers. The latter fact was emphasized by the meeting of the Conference in Leeds, for John Edwards's new chapel in that town stood there as a warning.

The Leeds Conference of 1755 occupies a prominent place in the history of Methodism. John Wesley's record of the business transacted is brief, but the instructed eye perceives that matters of supreme interest were discussed by those who were present. A short report of the Conference appears in the Appendix to the first volume of the printed *Minutes*, but we consult it in vain for information on the main subject of the ' conversations.' We are told that it occupied the attention of

the Conference ' for several days,' but the information about it is meagre and somewhat misleading. The *Minutes* represent ' the light that failed.' It is fortunate that we are not disappointed when we look in other directions for steady illumination. In Thomas Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley* and in Tyerman's *Life and Times of John Wesley*, we get the information we need. In describing the events of the Conference of 1755 both writers treat them as of the utmost importance. Tyerman says that ' it was an infinite mercy that Methodism was not dashed to pieces ' at this time ; Thomas Jackson uses more measured language, but is equally convinced of the peril that then threatened the Societies. The principal subjects discussed concerned the administration of the sacraments by the lay preachers, and the formal separation of the Societies from the Established Church. The two subjects were so closely related that it was inevitable that they should be considered at the same time, and the Conference discussed them for nearly three days.

The debates in the Leeds Conference had ' a long foreground.' The necessity of going to church to receive the sacrament from the hands of a persecuting clergyman had been often questioned by the harried members of the Societies. In addition the character of many of the clergy of the eighteenth century is well known to those who have dared to face disagreeable but undeniable facts. John Wesley had a painful experience which must have led him to understand the reluctance of many of his people to receive the sacrament at church. The man who repelled him from the sacrament in Epworth Church was drunk at the time. Having driven Wesley from the Lord's Table, this clergyman proceeded to administer the sacrament to those who wished to receive it from his hands. The spirit of John Wesley's old parishioners must have risen at this spectacle. It is also a recorded fact that some clergymen, although they refrained from driving the Methodists from the sacrament, were accustomed to pass them over when they distributed the elements at the communion rail. It is no wonder that, under such circumstances, conversations took place in the homes of the people, and that suggestions were made that would provide means of escape from a dilemma. The Wesleys were for ever insisting on the duty of frequent communion, and the clergy in many places were

resisting the approach of the Methodists to the Lord's Table. These persecuted people must have looked with envy towards London and Bristol, where the sacrament was regularly administered by the Wesleys. Why should not the same privileges be secured for the Methodists throughout the country? So far as the members of the Societies who were Dissenters were concerned, they went to their own chapels and received the sacrament from the hands of ministers who had not been episcopally ordained. In the Methodist Societies there were many people who had been gathered out of the world and had never frequented the churches. Why should they run the risk of being repelled from the sacrament by men who had raised the mob against them and violently persecuted them? Why could they not receive the sacrament from the hands of their own preachers?

These important questions were discussed throughout the country, the feeling in favour of their settlement being especially strong in the North of England. Without waiting for the decision of the Conference, a few of the preachers began to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to small groups in some of the Societies. Tyerman has preserved a valuable extract from Charles Wesley's shorthand diary which throws light on this fact. It is as follows:

1754, *October* 17.—Sister Macdonald first, and then Sister Clay, informed me that Charles Perronet gave the sacrament to the preachers Walsh and Deaves, and then to twelve at Sister Garder's, in the Minories.

October 18.—Sister Meredith told me that her husband had sent her word that Walsh had administered the sacrament at Reading.

October 19.—I was with my brother, who said nothing of Perronet except 'We have in effect ordained already.' He urged me to sign the preachers' certificates; was inclined to lay on hands; and to let the preachers administer.

October 24.—Was with my brother. He is wavering; but willing to wait before he ordains or separates.[1]

The dates of these entries in Charles Wesley's diary are significant. It was on October 19, 1753, that John Wesley returned to London at the beginning of the sickness that laid him aside from his itinerant work for many months. It is no wonder that Charles Wesley in his agitation, sought counsel from other people. He seems to have had recourse to Lady Huntingdon

[1] Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, ii. 202 *note*.

in his distress. She was at Clifton, and, being consulted, she expressed her conviction that she could not but believe that John Wesley had 'laid on hands'; otherwise the lay preachers would not have administered the sacraments. We may at once dismiss the thought of John Wesley's secret ordination of the men who had commenced to administer the sacraments; and we know that Charles Wesley did not spare her ladyship's convictions. He sought other counsel. He turned to Walter Sellon, who had been a lay preacher and a master at Kingswood School, but had taken orders in the Church of England; he was a curate at Smithsby, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and at two other places in Leicestershire. Atmore says he was very useful in that neighbourhood. He faithfully preached the gospel. Those who were brought to God by his ministry were united to the Methodist Societies. Sellon attended the Methodist services; and Atmore says, 'He considered the preachers as his brethren, and treated then accordingly.'[1] If his example had been followed throughout the country it is possible that the question of 'separation from the Church' would not have then arisen. The relation of the Church to the Methodists in Smithsby was ideal; at that time it was almost unique.

It is with no pleasure that we read Charles Wesley's letters to Walter Sellon. Tyerman bluntly says, 'These letters are not worthy of the man who wrote them. The scruples of men like Cownley, Walsh, and the two Perronets deserved respect, instead of being denounced as "pride—cursed pride."' Jackson, Charles Wesley's faithful and indulgent biographer, dealing with the accusations brought against the preachers, says, 'The men were not children, either in years, understanding, or piety. They were rebuked, but not convinced; and were left to utter their complaints in all directions. To treat them in this manner was only to restrain the evil for a time. It was not removed.'[2]

We have described Thomas Jackson as the indulgent biographer of Charles Wesley. He does not stand alone. We must remember that while, at this time, John Wesley was gaining much light on the Nonconformist position and was perceiving its strength and reasonableness, Charles Wesley's

[1] Atmore's *Methodist Memorial*, 381.

[2] Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, ii. 203; Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 78. The letters of Charles Wesley appear in these volumes.

devotion to the Church of England was swiftly increasing. As a pioneer, in earlier days, he had struck into paths that led the Methodist people into departures from that Church; but now his love for it deepened into an overmastering passion. We have watched the progress of the change that came over him. When he left the University, so far as we are able to read his thoughts, he had no intention of becoming a clergyman. Then came the Georgia episode. He was selected to go there as Oglethorpe's private secretary and secretary for Indian affairs. At the time when the arrangement was made he was not in holy orders. Dr. John Burton, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, who was responsible for recommending the Wesleys to the Georgia trustees, was of opinion that it would be well if Charles Wesley were ordained. After some persuasion he yielded, and the whole course of his life was changed.[1]

It is possible that Charles Wesley's reluctance to become a clergyman arose from his high conception of the dignity and responsibility of the office. That reluctance being overcome, we know how he acted during his six months' stay in Georgia. He developed an extreme form of High Churchmanship that annoyed the people, and had much to do with his return to England. After his return the great event of his life occurred. He was converted. He became an ardent evangelist, and for a considerable time the High Churchman in him was subdued. But although his work in Georgia had failed, and his 'irregular' actions in England had brought a rich harvest of success, now and then the vision of a clergyman's life in a parish attracted him. We know that early in 1739 the living of Cowley became vacant and he offered for it but did not obtain it.[2] After his marriage, the life of a wandering evangelist who was frequently weakened by sickness became irksome, and the position of a parish clergyman regained some of its attraction. In his *Journal* there is a suggestive letter. Like many of his letters, the year when it was written is omitted. Thomas Jackson sighs over this tantalizing habit. In arranging Charles Wesley's letters there is one which must have been written in the 'fifties.' It is headed 'Knightsbridge, July 25,' and it contains a postscript dated 'Sunday afternoon.' The letter

[1] *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 112.
[2] *Ibid.*, 238.

was written on Saturday, July 25, and the postscript on July 26. These dates of day and month agree with those that occurred in 1752. If we accept that year, we come to the conclusion that three years before the Leeds Conference of 1755 was held Charles Wesley was ready to consider an offer of a 'living' in the Church of England. Writing to his wife, he says, 'I breakfasted this morning with M. Gumley, who made me an offer of Drayton living, in Oxfordshire, the drunken incumbent being near death. I neither refused nor accepted it; for I had not consulted you.'[1]

Attempting to understand Charles Wesley's position, there is another fact we must bear in mind. In *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* we described the furious riots at Sheffield in May, 1743, when Charles Wesley was mobbed and stoned. Reaching Leeds, he went to 'the great church.' He was conducted to 'the minister's pew,' was asked to assist in the administration of the sacrament, and gladly consented. The courtesy of the Leeds clergy made a deep impression on him, but in his *Journal* he says, 'I dreaded their favour more than the stones in Sheffield.'[2] During the interval of twelve years his fear of the favour of the clergy gradually diminished. He met a number of them who treated him with respect. He gained the affection of some of them, and a desire of their friendship took the place of the fear of their favour. These influences, acting together, had confirmed his Churchmanship and had brought him nearer to his old position.

On Monday, April 28, John Wesley met his brother in Birstall, and on the following Wednesday and Thursday they were closely engaged in considering the important question that was to be discussed at the approaching Conference. We judge the nature of their conversation from the fact that on these days they read together a tract written by Micaiah Towgood, a Dissenting minister who lived in Exeter. The tract was in the form of three letters to John White, B.D., Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Vicar of Ospringe, near Faversham, who had written a defence of the Established Church.[3] Towgood entitled his tract *A Gentleman's Reasons for his Dissent from the Church of England.* John Wesley

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 212.
[2] *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 122.
[3] See John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 114 *note.*

describes it as 'an elaborate and lively tract,' and says that 'it contains the strength of the cause.' It was seriously considered by the brothers. John Wesley, in his *Journal* entry on Thursday, May 1, makes mention of Richard Baxter; from which we conclude that he talked with his brother about the new information he had derived from the book on *Church Councils*. Speaking of Towgood, he says, 'In how different a spirit does this man write from honest Richard Baxter! The one dipping, as it were, his pen in tears, the other in vinegar and gall. Surely one page of that loving, serious Christian weighs more than volumes of this bitter, sarcastic jester.' The result of reading and conversation was that the brothers agreed that Towgood's tract did not yield them one proof that it was lawful for them, much less their duty, to separate from the Established Church.

On Tuesday, May 6, the Conference began in Leeds. It was held in the new chapel, Wesley living for the week in the preachers' house in Boggard Close. We regret that we have not been able to find a full account of the business transacted. In the Appendix to the first volume of the *Minutes of Conference* there is a brief account, but it is somewhat inaccurate, and in one particular it is misleading. It opens by saying that the Conference was held on May 22, 1755. On that date we know that John Wesley was in Newcastle. Then it says that sixty-three preachers were present. A little farther on it gives us a list of the preachers who were then in association with the Wesleys. There were thirty-four itinerants, twelve half-itinerants, and fifteen chief local preachers; that is, counting the Wesleys and William Grimshaw, there were sixty-one Methodist preachers in England, Ireland, and Wales at that time, if we include the half-itinerants and the chief local preachers. It is not likely that John Wesley would take away the preachers from three countries to attend this conference. If he had done so, and sixty-three preachers were present, the decisions of the Conference would possess extraordinary authority.

We are not able to say how many preachers were present at this Conference; but, in addition to the Wesleys, we note that William Grimshaw was there. A rumour was stirring in the Societies concerning him which caused uneasiness. He knew that the principal subject that was to be discussed at the

Conference was the question of separation from the Church, and it was alleged that if the Conference decided to leave the Church he would leave the Methodists. Before the Conference met Charles Wesley had tried to persuade another clergyman to attend its sittings. He had undertaken to secure Walter Sellon's admission, relying on him to throw the weight of his influence into the scale against secession; but there is no record of his attendance, and it is improbable that he accepted Charles Wesley's personal invitation.

In the absence of a full report of the discussions on the vital question which occupied so much time at the Leeds Conference we must search for light from other sources. The report in the *Minutes* says that the question, 'Ought we to separate from the Established Church?' was considered at large; and, 'after a free and full debate, continued for several days, it was agreed that we ought not.'[1] Charles Wesley at the end of the discussion left the Conference abruptly. Writing to his wife on May 16, he told her he 'left the brethren in Conference.' He says that he took 'a French leave,' and set out from Leeds without saying farewell to his brother and Mrs. John Wesley. He evidently thought that the discussion had resulted in a temporary truce, for he says, 'All agreed not to separate; so the wound is healed slightly.'[2] We shall have to turn to John Wesley if we are to get guidance. The supreme question that demands an answer concerns his opinions on the result of the deliberations of the Conference.

In *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* we mentioned the name of Samuel Walker, of Truro.[3] In 1746 he resigned the vicarage of Lanlivery and removed to the curacy of St. Mary's, in Truro. A great change came over his spiritual experience; his preaching was filled with evangelical truth and fervour, and it resulted in the conversion of many of his hearers. His biographer says that the succession of 'inquirers' became so numerous that he was obliged to rent two rooms at a distance from his lodging in the town in order to hold spiritual intercourse with them in private.[4] Going along a pathway of experience previously trodden by the Wesleys, he found it advisable to gather his converts into Societies which bore some resemblance to the Religious Societies formed on Dr.

[1] *Minutes*, i. 710. [2] C. Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 202. [3] pp. 138–139.
[4] See Sidney's *Life and Ministry of the Rev. Samuel Walker*, 19.

Josiah Woodward's plan. As these were Societies in his parish, he constantly gave them his own personal attention, and his influence predominated in the conduct of the meetings. His influence spread beyond Truro. He formed a union among 'the pious clergy in his neighbourhood, for the purpose of mutual edification, encouragement, and advice, as to pastoral duties.' The original number of members was seven; afterwards it increased to eleven. They met for the first time on March 18, 1755. The little group became known as 'The Parson's Club.' Sidney says, 'A great outcry was, however, raised against it, on the alleged ground of Methodistical bias; a charge most unfounded, as every one of its members was sincerely attached to the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England. . . . Many fluctuations took place in this happy union, occasioned by deaths, removals to distant places, and in two instances by a fear of the violent opposition they had to encounter; still, upon the whole it conferred upon the clergy who belonged to the club, and their parishes, a lasting advantage.'[1] This brief description of Samuel Walker's 'Societies' and 'Club' will suggest that before long he would be brought into friendly relations with the Wesleys; and such was the case.

In Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley* we find that a correspondence between Wesley and Samuel Walker commenced in 1755. Walker had written to him, speaking his mind freely on the subject of the separation of the Methodists from the Church of England. Being in Bristol on September 24, Wesley replies; and, from his reply we get insight into his opinion concerning the conversation that had taken place in Leeds. John Wesley's record of the proceedings of the Leeds Conference in his *Journal* is as follows: 'The point on which we desired all the preachers to speak their minds at large was, "Whether we ought to separate from the Church?" Whatever was advanced on one side or the other was seriously and calmly considered; and on the third day we were all fully agreed in that general conclusion—that (whether it was *lawful* or not) it was no ways *expedient*.' At last we have clear light on the two subjects of discussion. Two subjects had been before the Conference; one had not been settled; the other had been unanimously approved.[2]

[1] Sidney's *Life of Walker*, 77. [2] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 115.

In Wesley's letter to Samuel Walker we find that the entry in the *Journal* represents the case accurately. Wesley in his letter to Walker says: 'All that you say concerning the inexpediency of a separation from the Church I readily allow; as, likewise, that the first and main question must be, Is it *lawful* to separate? Accordingly, this was debated first, and that at large, in seven or eight long conversations. And it was then only, when we could not agree concerning this, that we proceeded to weigh the *expediency* of it.' After stating some of the reasons assigned by the preachers why they ought to separate from the Church, Wesley's letter increases in interest, as it enables us to see his own opinion on the subject. He says:

I will freely acknowledge that I cannot answer these arguments to my own satisfaction; so that my conclusion, which I cannot yet give up, 'that it is lawful to continue in the Church' stands almost without any premises that are able to bear its weight.

My difficulty is very much increased by one of your observations. I know the original doctrines of the Church are sound; and I know her worship is, in the main, pure and scriptural; but, if 'the essence of the Church of England,' considered as such, consists in her orders and laws (many of which I myself can say nothing for), and not in her worship and doctrines, those who separate from her have a far stronger plea than I was ever sensible of.

At present, I apprehend those, and those only, to separate from the Church, who either renounce her fundamental doctrines, or refuse to join in her public worship. As yet, we have done neither; nor have we taken one step further than we were convinced was our bounden duty. It is from a full conviction of this that we have—(1) preached abroad; (2) prayed extempore; (3) formed Societies; and (4) permitted preachers who were not episcopally ordained. And were we pushed on this side, were there no alternative allowed, we should judge it our bounden duty rather wholly to separate from the Church than to give up any one of these points. Therefore, if we cannot stop a separation without stopping lay preachers, the case is clear: we cannot stop it at all.

But if we permit them, should we not do more? Should we not appoint them, since the bare permission puts the matter out of our hands, and deprives us of all our influence? In great measure it does; therefore to appoint them is far more expedient, if it be lawful. But is it lawful for presbyters, circumstanced as we are, to appoint other ministers? This is the very point wherein we desire advice, being afraid of leaning to our own understanding.

It is undoubtedly needful, as you observe, to come to some resolution on this point, and the sooner the better. I therefore, rejoice to hear

that you think, 'this matter may be better, and more inoffensively ordered; and that a method may be found, which, conducted with prudence and patience, will reduce the constitution of Methodism to due order, and render the Methodists, under God, more instrumental to the ends of practical religion.' This, sir, is the very thing I want. I must, therefore, beg your sentiments on this head; and that as particularly as your other engagements will allow.

Tyerman says that the contents of this letter prove three momentous facts. 1. That the Conference of 1755 could not come to an agreement as to the *lawfulness* of separating from the Church of England; and that the only point settled was as to the present *expediency* of such a separation. 2. That the arguments used in favour of a separation were arguments which Wesley was not able to answer to his own satisfaction. And, 3. That rather than give up open-air preaching, extemporaneous prayer, forming Societies, and permitting men not episcopally ordained to preach, Wesley would wholly separate himself from the Established Church. These conclusions are sound. It is surprising that Tyerman does not give more prominence to the suggestion concerning the 'appointment' of lay preachers. It looks in the direction of ordination by presbyters; but many years passed before that problem was solved. As we look along the path subsequently travelled by John Wesley we have no hesitation in saying that the Leeds Conference of 1755 marked the commencement of a new era in the history of the Methodist Church.

XXIII

ENGLAND IN DANGER

LEAVING Leeds with his wife, John Wesley began a tour among the northern Societies. On May 13 he reached Newcastle, and did not find things there in the order he expected. Many were on the point of leaving the Church; some had already left. He was annoyed by rumours that he approved of such secessions. A few days afterwards he spoke to the members of the Society severally, and found far fewer who were prejudiced against the Church than he expected. They numbered about forty. During this visit he had the joy of meeting his friends Dr. Gillies of Glasgow and Mr. Wardrobe of Bathgate, both of whom preached for him in the Orphan House, to the no small amazement and displeasure of their zealous countrymen.

We find John Wesley, during the opening days of June, at York. We must pause there for a few moments. Immediately after his arrival he preached in the 'Room' in Pump Yard. It was 'like an oven through the multitude of people.' We are watching his pilgrimage during his convalescence with considerable anxiety, and are reassured by his statement that in this service he felt no want of strength. The 'Room' in Pump Yard accommodated about one hundred and twenty persons, so we presume that many stood outside and were able to hear the sound of his voice. This little 'Room' arrests our attention. In Dr. John Lyth's *Glimpses of Early Methodism in York* there is an extract from Davies's *Walks through the City of York*. Davies says that in July, 1754, William Horsman, Elizabeth Gray, Nicholas Baldock, Mary Bayocke, Ebenezer Harrison, Ann Falkner, William Shipton, and John Thorpe 'certified to the Court of Quarter Sessions that they intended to make use of a house of John Elwick, junior, and others, situate in Newgate, as a place of worship of Almighty God for Protestant Dissenters.'

Explaining the step that had been taken, Dr. Lyth says that the applicants, who without doubt were all members of the Society, were constrained to adopt this course for the peaceable enjoyment of their religious privileges. Within a few months afterwards Sam Stow, a mariner, and Sam Penrose, a wheelwright, were held to bail for 'purposely and contemptuously disturbing the congregation assembled at a meeting-house in Newgate.'[1] When we recall the incidents marking the introduction of Methodism into York and its neighbourhood we see the wisdom of the step taken by the men and women who secured the registration of the 'Room.' Dr. Lyth's statement enables us to add another instance of the 'recording' of 'Rooms' in addition to those we have mentioned.

Wesley was still busy with the problem of his relation to the Church of England. In 1753 Dr. Thomas Sharp, who was Archdeacon of Northumberland, published a book entitled *The Rubric in the Book of Common Prayer, and the Canons of the Church of England, so far as they relate to the Parochial Clergy, considered in a course of Visitation Charges.* This book came into Wesley's hands, and he studied it while he was in York. On June 6 he says in his *Journal*: 'I read Dr. Sharp's elaborate tracts on the Rubrics and Canons. He justly observes, with regard to all these: (1) that our governors have power to dispense with our observance of them; (2) that a tacit dispensation is of the same force with an *explicit* dispensation; (3) that their continued connivance at what they cannot but know is a tacit dispensation.' An ecclesiastical lawyer would probably challenge the correctness of Dr. Sharp's conclusions; but John Wesley was impressed by them. Acting on the supposition of their correctness, he says, 'If it be, he has himself answered his own charge against the Methodists (so called). For suppose the Canons did forbid field-preaching, as expressly as playing at cards and frequenting taverns, yet we have the very same plea for the former as any clergyman has for the latter. All our governors, the King, the archbishop, and bishops, connive at the one as well as the other.'[2] We think that in his eagerness to impale the archdeacon on the horns of a dilemma Wesley did not give sufficient weight to the fact that field-preaching, except in duly registered places, was in opposition to the law of the land, and that

[1] Lyth's *Early Methodism in York*, 81. [2] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 120.

kings, archbishops, and bishops may not connive at the breach of laws, so long as they stand on the statute-book. However, Wesley got in his stroke; and perhaps it gave him some satisfaction.

John Wesley got back to London on Thursday, June 19. He stayed there until the last day of the month. Then he set out for Norwich, and reached that city the next evening. As a large congregation was waiting in the Foundery he could not but preach, 'though weary enough.' During the two following days he spoke to each member of the Society. He returned to London, and there reviewed the events of May and June, two exceptionally important months. It is probable he thought of certain valedictory words he had spoken at the close of the Leeds Conference.[1] His visit to York had impressed him with the fact that the increasing success of Methodism was attended with danger. When he left York he says, 'I took my leave of the richest Society, number for number, which we have in England. I hope this place will not prove (as Cork has for some time done) the Capua of our preachers.' He dreaded the seductions of Capua. During his sickness the preachers in England and Ireland had been deprived of the inspiration of his example, and there can be no doubt that the aggressive work in some neighbourhoods had suffered.

It has been said that 'loyalty is part of the definition of a Methodist'; it certainly was one of John Wesley's leading characteristics. He was loyal to the King; he was a passionate lover of England. At the time we have reached an event was approaching which strongly moved him. Those who have studied the history of this country in the eighteenth century are aware that England and France were at war together from March 31, 1744, to April, 1748.[2] It is convenient to keep these dates in mind; but if they cause us to think that there was peace between the two countries until war broke out again in 1756 we shall be misled. Confining ourselves, for the present, to the conflicts that disturbed the two nations during the interval between 1748 and 1756, we look across the Atlantic. In America, England and France were constantly at war. The English colonies in America lay on

[1] For his searching address see *Minutes of Conference*, i. 711.
[2] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 179.

the eastern sea-border of the great continent. On the north they ran up towards Canada, then in the possession of the French; on the south, Georgia touched Florida, which was Spanish territory. The English colonies at many points were hemmed in by the great mountains that rose on their western frontier. Beyond that rampart spread forests and prairie lands that reached the Pacific. The French claimed this immense wild country as their own. That claim was disputed by the English settlers; and verbal disputes ended in wars. No one has told the story of these wars so carefully and vividly as Francis Parkman, the brilliant American historian. In a series of books beginning with *The Pioneers of France in the New World* and ending with *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* he has unveiled the history of four centuries. His fine literary style was associated with an extraordinary capacity for minute and exhaustive research, and for remarkable power of exact statement. The brilliant historian does not always possess the confidence of his readers; but whatever we may think of some of Parkman's opinions, we may confidently say that he is always ready to indicate his authority for his facts.

In the seventh chapter of Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe* we read the tragic story of an event that caused intense excitement in England in 1755. The conflict between the French and English colonies in America reached a crisis so severe that England had been compelled to send regular troops to assist the colonists in the constantly recurring wars. We are only concerned now with one fight in which these troops acted. The British force sailed from England under the command of Major-General Braddock. It landed in America, and, after considerable delay, a small army was gathered together.[1] On June 10, 1755, Braddock left Fort Cumberland and commenced his march towards Fort du Quesne. He struck into the broad wilderness. It was a long trail. The progress was slow. He was not accustomed to accept advice, but, finding his march delayed, he listened to the suggestion of a Virginian officer who thought it would be wise to split his column in two, leaving the less able-bodied troops to act as a reserve. We listen to the voice of the

[1] In Smollett's *Continuation of the Complete History of England* will be found a careful account of this unfortunate expedition. We have collated it with Parkman's description. See Smollett, i. 256–261.

Virginian officer with intense interest. It is the voice of George Washington. In the company left behind we notice two men who are worth watching. They are talking about a country across the big mountains from North Carolina which one of them, at the risk of his life, has visited. It was a country occupied by Indians; it abounded in thick grass, rich food for horses and cattle wearied with picking up mouthfuls from the pine-barrens. The daring explorer was John Finley, who is described as a Scotch-Irishman. His companion listened to him, and asked if Kentucky was a good hunting country; he was assured that it was 'the best in the world.' The two men made a compact that, when Fort du Quesne had been taken, they would make their way to Kentucky. They had to postpone their arrangement. The man who talked with Finley amongst the wagons was Daniel Boone, the maker of the famous Wilderness Road that runs over the mountains to the West.[1]

We must hasten after the troops that are piercing the dense woods on their way to Fort du Quesne. A narrow road had to be cut for them, their baggage, and the ten pieces of cannon with their ammunition, and for the provisions needed for the troops. Smollett says that Braddock marched on with so much expedition, that he seldom took any time to reconnoitre the woods or thickets he was to pass through; as if the nearer he approached the enemy, the farther he was removed from danger. It is time we got a nearer view of Braddock. Let us see him through the eyes of an Englishman:

He was undoubtedly a man of courage, and expert in all the punctilios of a review, having been brought up in the English guards; but he was naturally very haughty, positive, and difficult of access; qualities ill-suited to the temper of the people amongst whom he was to command. His extreme severity in matters of discipline had always made his soldiers dislike him; and the strict military education in which he had been trained from his youth, and which he prided himself on strictly following, made him hold the American militia in great contempt, because they could not go through their exercise with the same dexterity and regularity as a regiment of guards in Hyde Park, little knowing, or indeed being able to form, any idea of the difference between the European manner of fighting and an American expedition through woods, deserts, and morasses. Before he left England, he received, in the handwriting of Colonel Napier, a set of instructions from the Duke

[1] See H. Addington Bruce's *Daniel Boone and the Wilderness Road*, 30.

of Cumberland. . . . Above all, his royal highness, both verbally and in this writing, frequently cautioned him carefully of an ambush or surprise. Instead of regarding this salutary caution, his conceit of his own abilities made him disdain to ask the opinion of any under his command; and the Indians, who would have been his safest guards against this danger in particular, were so disgusted by the haughtiness of his behaviour, that most of them forsook his banners.[1]

We have selected Smollett's opinion of the character of Braddock because it is written with a self-restraint not discernible in other writers. It is easy to guess the probable result of his leadership. We will not dwell on the incidents of the catastrophe for which he was mainly responsible. The French had a large number of Indians acting with them. On July 9, stealing along the forest track-ways, the Indians formed an ambuscade. The forest where they were concealed was silent. Then they heard the tramp of the troops who were marching to the sound of the drum. Suddenly the English soldiers were encircled by the hidden host. Fire was opened on them. Our men were shot down as they marched in their ranks; Braddock received his death-wound; a panic set in; the soldiers, after fighting in vain, fled; and a horrifying massacre began. Some of the colonial troops fought the enemy in their own forest fashion, regardless of the scorn that had been poured on it. They did something to stop the pursuit, but the defeat was past repair. Among those who attempted to rally the troops once more we see George Washington. The retreat was at last checked. On Sunday, July 13, Braddock died. He was buried the next day in a grave dug in the forest road. Parkman says that 'men, horses, and wagons passed over the grave, effacing every sign of it, lest the Indians should find and mutilate the body.'[2]

When the news of the defeat and massacre reached England it increased the excitement that had prevailed for many months. The fears of an invasion had been roused by the fact that in the naval dockyards at Brest it had been discovered that many ships were being built. There seemed to be only one explanation—the French were preparing to land an army in England. Immediate steps were taken to strengthen the

[1] Smollett's *Continuation of the History of England*, i. 256–257.

[2] In after years Fort Pitt took the place of Fort du Quesne. At present the site of the Fort is covered by part of the great town of Pittsburgh.

defences of the coast; and, without waiting for a declaration of war, battleships and privateers set out to guard the Channel. A large number of French prizes were captured and brought into English harbours. The route to America was patrolled in order that French warships might be captured which were carrying troops to fight against the British in that country. Several escaped; but in May an action was fought off Cape Race, in Newfoundland, when two French warships were captured. Smollett thinks that the commencement of the war may be dated from the taking of these ships, but the declaration was still delayed for a year. It was not until May 18, 1756, that England declared war against France; on June 9 the French declaration was made. The Seven Years' War that followed has been described as the most terrible conflict of the eighteenth century. 'It convulsed Europe and shook America, India, the coasts of Africa, and the islands of the sea.'[1]

This long period of irregular warfare brought a severe strain on the temper and endurance of the English people. The symptoms that were so pronounced in 1744 reappeared. The dread of invasion took possession of the people, and the danger of panic was imminent. But the country prepared for the inevitable war. In a letter written by Charles Wesley on Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1755, we get a glimpse of a remarkable fact. Writing to his wife, he says: 'My brother tells me the French are expected every hour, by General Hawley, in battle array; that the Government have not the least doubt of the invasion, but will do their best to repel force by force.' Then follows a sentence that arrests us: 'I question whether my brother's soldiers, with all his pains and haste to train them up, will not be too tardy to rescue us.'[2] It has been thought by some that John Wesley's offer to raise a company of soldiers for home defence was an invention of an imaginative mind; but the fact rests on a solid foundation. In the Standard Edition of his *Journal* there is a note that puts the matter beyond dispute. In the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for 1848 there is a copy of a letter from John Wesley to the Hon. James West, in which he offers, if acceptable to His Majesty, to raise 'a company

[1] Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, i. 352, Boston ed.
[2] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 200.

of at least two hundred volunteers to be supported by contributions among themselves, and to be ready, in case of invasion, to act for a year, if needed so long, at His Majesty's pleasure, only within —— miles of London.' If his offer is accepted, he asks for a loan of arms from the Tower, and sergeants to train the corps of Methodist 'territorials.' This letter is in the British Museum; it is endorsed 'March 2, 1756, Mr. Westley.' It will be seen that the formal offer to the King was delayed, but the scheme of raising the company was formed before the time when Charles Wesley's letter was written in 1755. He does not give the year, but Sunday, December 7, fixes it.[1]

In the midst of the excitement produced by the fears of invasion and the startling incidents of the war John Wesley held on his way. His experiences at the Leeds Conference must have opened his eyes to the fact that the burden of the management of the Societies rested on him; and that, notwithstanding his physical weakness, it must be borne. That fact was emphasized by the refusal of his brother to visit the Societies in Cornwall. He may also have heard the rumour which Charles Wesley mentions in a letter to his wife, written from London, on September 13, in which he says, 'The people here have taken it into their heads that I should never come to them again. Had it been so, many of our oldest and best children would have followed me to Bristol or America; and such as could not would have withdrawn from the Society.'[2] The suggestion of the possibility of Charles Wesley's migration to America at such a time opens up vistas in which speculation freely wanders; but the settlement in Bristol is not without significance.

It is with relief we record the fact that in this month of September, John Wesley finished his *Notes upon the New Testament*. Charles Perronet was in London; and, as Jackson says, he had charge of the works John Wesley was passing through the press. That fact diminishes our elation. In a former chapter we have given some account of the commencement and character of this important book; but as a copy of the first edition now lies before us it is necessary to add some supplementary remarks. John Wesley's placid mind must

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 150–151, *note*.
[2] Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 87–88.

have been ruffled during the printing of this book. This thick quarto volume, which so strongly reminds us of 'the big ha' Bible' of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' has at the end an appalling collection of 'Errata.' It occupies, as we have said, two and a half pages of closely packed double columns. Passing over mistakes in the 'text,' we glance at some in the 'notes.' Let us look first at 1 Tim. iii., in which the characters of a bishop and a deacon are described. We dwell with interest on Wesley's comment on the absence of any mention of presbyters in the list of church officers given by St. Paul. Here it is: 'But where are Presbyters? Were this Order essentially distinct from that of Bishops, could the Apostle have passed it over in silence?' That question lights the way on which Wesley was travelling, and which led to a well-known action in his later years. There was no need to alter that query. But, in the description of deacons, words that ought to have been inserted in the *Notes* had been omitted, and it was necessary to restore them in the 'Errata.' The tenth verse had been made to read, 'And let these be proved first, then let them minister, being found blameless.' But Wesley had written: 'Let a trial be made how they behave, then let them be fixt in that Office.' That seems like a shortened form of what Wesley had written in his manuscript. Among the 'Errata' the note stands thus: 'Let a Tryal be made how they behave and That they outwardly adorn the Gospel (ver. 8); That they inwardly *experience* the Power of the Gospel (ver. 9).' The omitted words reveal the Methodist position, and are of much importance. Wesley's attempted amendment of this note in the first edition was in vain. The editors of succeeding editions seem to have overlooked his correction.

In estimating the value of the first edition of the *Notes upon the New Testament* we must bear in mind the large number of errata which Wesley appended to the book. He made no claim to infallibility. He was thankful when a man whom he respected saved him from error. For instance, on June 28, 1755, he wrote to Mr. Richard Tompson acknowledging a letter he had received from him. He says it came 'exceeding seasonably, for I was just revising my "Notes" on the fifth chapter to the Romans: one of which I found, upon a closer inspection, seemed to assert such an imputation

of Adam's sin to his posterity, as might make way for the "horrible decree." I therefore struck it out immediately.'[1] We shall see that Wesley was not contented with the first edition of the *Notes*. In 1760, 1761, and 1762, he issued volumes which bear on their title-pages the words, 'The third edition, corrected.' As this edition possesses exceptional importance we will reserve our comments upon it.[2]

We have seen that John Wesley, when his brother declined to visit the Cornish Societies, set out himself on Monday, August 18. He was not fit to undertake such a journey, but it brought him unexpected relief. He was absent from London until October 25, when, notwithstanding all the forebodings of his friends, he was in at least as good health as when he commenced his long tour. His wife did not accompany him; and Charles Wesley, who supplied his place in London, had the advantage of her society. On August 31 we find John Wesley at Redruth. We note that early in the evening he preached to several thousands of people assembled at Gwennap. After he had closed the service the rain poured down till about four o'clock the next morning. We presume that in the evening he was storm-bound in Redruth, for we see that he occupied his time in writing a letter to his friend Ebenezer Blackwell, who had done so much to promote his marriage. On May 12, after the Leeds Conference, he rode with his wife to Northallerton. He says nothing in his *Journal* that gives us any knowledge of what occurred during that ride, but something did happen that strained the relations between husband and wife. The Redruth letter may give us some light. The editor of his *Journal* says that the letter to Blackwell shows 'the kind of irritations which, coupled with jealousies, were straining to breaking-point the relations between two persons who ought never to have become husband and wife.' We have glanced at this unpleasant subject occasionally; but it will have to be faced. Omitting the last paragraph, the letter is as follows:

Experience confirms your advice both ways. In my last journey into the North, all my patience was put to the proof again and again; and all my endeavour to please, yet without success. In my present journey I leap as broke from chains. I am content with whatever

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 451. Third ed.

[2] See *W.H.S. Proceedings*, ix. 97–113, xiii. 103–105.

entertainment I meet with, and my companions are always in good humour, 'because they are with me.' This must be the spirit of all who take journeys with me. If a dinner ill-dressed, a hard bed, a poor room, a shower of rain, or a dirty road, will put them out of humour, it lays a burden upon me, greater than all the rest put together. By the grace of God, I never fret. I repine at nothing; I am discontented with nothing. And to have persons at my ear, fretting and murmuring at everything, is like tearing my flesh off my bones. I see God sitting upon His throne, and ruling all things well. Although, therefore, I can bear this also, to hear His government of the world continually found fault with (for in blaming the things which He alone can alter, we, in effect blame Him); yet it is such a burden to me as I cannot bear without pain; and I bless God when it is removed.[1]

Wesley was writing to a friend, and pours out the suppressed feeling of years. Writing later to Blackwell from St. Ives, he says, 'We have hitherto had an extremely prosperous journey: almost everything has been just as we desired; and I have no care upon my mind, but what properly belongs to me—to feed and guide the flock of Christ.' Then the ominous note is sounded once more: 'Charles Perronet being out of town last Saturday, my paquet, directed to him, fell into other hands. This has raised a violent storm; for it contained a few lines which I writ to Mrs. Lefevre, in answer to a letter she sent me a week before concerning Mr. Furly. It is pity! I should be glad if I had to do with reasonable people. But this likewise is for good.' In these letters we have a view of the causes of Wesley's domestic troubles. Fretfulness, suspicion, raging jealousy! Blessed are the people to whom such an experience is incomprehensible.

Wesley enjoyed his freedom during this tour. Watching him as he moves about, we sometimes indulge the hope that he has found his lost youth again. He preaches constantly, and finds time for occasional rest, and for healthful relaxation. We know that he was highly sensitive to the appeal of the wonderful and to the beauty of natural scenery. We see him walking on the Cornish coast near St. Agnes, and rejoice as he explores the caverns. He grows enthusiastic as he looks from side to roof and catches 'the glitter that is bright and ruddy as gold.' He pauses in the dim light of the cave until the colours are more clearly defined. There is a fine sky-blue; and yonder a patch of enamel 'exactly like

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 167–168.

mother-of-pearl'; and, again, 'a great crust like alabaster.' Those who know the Cornish caverns at the Lizard will understand his delight. It was during this journey, when he found himself in Somerset, that he heard the call of Glastonbury Tor. He admits that the hill is extremely steep, and of an uncommon height, but he says that it commands the country on all sides, as well as the Bristol Channel. The call was irresistible. He and his companions dismounted, and climbed the hill. When we stand there at the present time, we see much that was hidden from the eyes of Wesley. We think of the time when the Tor was an island in the midst of the blue sea; we watch the retreat of the waters, until land appears. The expanse is dotted here and there with lakes, in which we catch sight of dwellings that are still yielding up their secrets to the patient antiquary; we look across to the Cheddar Cliffs, those monuments of dim and distant ages; and then we turn towards the Channel and see the 'flat' and the 'steep' islands, which remind us of the aspect of the old world. Much has vanished, but the hills remain. Yonder is 'Weary-all-hill,' where, so says legend, the pilgrims from Syria rested before descending into the valley; and there are the ruins of the beautiful abbey, which is haunted by bright memories of a later time. And this valley, is it not the Vale of Avilion?

> Where falls not hail or rain or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
> Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
> And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea.

But Bristol has to be reached, so Wesley and his companions rise; descend to the plain; mount their horses and ride on their way.

John Wesley stayed for about a month in Bristol. We note that he preached on the south-west side of the city, that is, in Bedminster. Although, in his opinion, a considerable part of the congregation had hardly ever heard a sermon in the open air before, all the listeners were serious and attentive. He bears his testimony to the fact that in Bristol there was at that time 'no rudeness.' He also preached once more in Stokes Croft. He does not specify the spot on which the service was held. We wonder that he did not go to 'The Old Orchard,' but availing ourselves of the light which Latimer

has so often shed on our Bristol difficulties, we think we see sufficient reason for the change of place. He says:

> About the close of 1755 a square was laid out on the slope of Kingsdown. 'The New Square,' for it was seldom styled King Square until some years later, was one of John Wesley's favourite preaching stations. Several wealthy families then inhabited it. . . . . Contemporaneously with these upper-class erections, a number of dwellings were rising in the 'Old Orchard' of the Dominican friary—an estate which fell to the Penn family through the marriage of the famous William Penn with Hannah, a daughter of Thomas Callowhill, a Bristol Quaker. 'New built' houses in Callowhill Street are mentioned in a local paper in 1755. In March, 1757, another new dwelling was offered 'in a street named Penn Street, in "The Old Orchard."' Philadelphia Street was built a few years later.[1]

On Saturday, October 25, John Wesley arrived in London. The next day he entered on his 'London duty.' Let us see what he did. He read prayers, preached, and gave the sacrament at Snowsfields in the morning; preached and gave the sacrament at noon in West Street Chapel; met the leaders at three; conducted a funeral at four; and preached again in the Chapel at five in the afternoon. Then he met the Society, and concluded the day with a general love-feast. On Wednesday, November 5, an incident occurred that brightens the pages of his *Journal*. He makes this record: 'Mr. Whitefield called upon me. Disputings are now no more; we love one another, and join hand in hand to promote the cause of our common Master.'

John Wesley found London suffering from apprehension of the coming war with France. The excitement was greatly increased by the news of the terrible earthquake in Lisbon. It occurred on November 1. The story is well known. A large part of the city was destroyed. The lowest estimate of the loss of life was ten thousand. When these calamities occur the sympathies of England are stirred, and the better side of the national character appears. Help was sent at once to the survivors. Charles Wesley notes the fact that no English lives were lost. He says that on the day of the earthquake there was to have been an 'act of faith,' that is 'a bonfire of Jews and heretics.' It was usual on such occasions for most of the English merchants and their families

[1] *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, 318.

to go out of town lest they should catch sight of the disgusting spectacle, and be subjected to the insults of the Roman Catholic crowds. Smollett mentions this fact, and also says that the quarter in which the English chiefly lived, and where they had their warehouses, suffered the least of any part of the city.[1] Being much importuned, John Wesley wrote a tract entitled *Serious Thoughts on the Earthquake at Lisbon*, which soon ran into six editions, and Charles Wesley preached on *The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes*. His sermon has been attributed to John Wesley; but in Thomas Jackson's *Recollections* the mistake is corrected.

John Wesley had much to occupy his attention during this visit to London. He was expecting the publication of the *Notes upon the New Testament*, and must have wondered if his pains and expense would be rewarded. During the year the concluding volumes of the *Christian Library* had been issued, and that literary adventure had brought him serious loss. Then the city was throbbing with excitement, and all work had to be done under high pressure. No man in the country was better adapted by original constitution to endure these severe tests, but he was suffering from overstrain, and was liable to sudden physical collapse. Those who watched him became anxious, and the expected happened. On December 12 his malady suddenly returned; and for a time he seems to have lost heart. He shall tell the story himself. 'I came as well as usual to Moorfields: but there my strength entirely failed, and such a faintness and weariness seized me that it was with difficulty I got home. I could not but think how happy it would be (suppose we were ready for the Bridegroom) to sink down and steal away at once, without any of the hurry and pomp of dying! Yet it is happier still to glorify God in our death as well as our life.' But the time had not come for him to sing the *Nunc Dimittis*. He was soon at work again with a courage that inspired his loving people.

[1] See Charles Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 201; Smollett's *Continuation of the History of England*, i. 293

XXIV

SHADOWS OF COMING WAR

On December 23, 1755, Parliament adjourned, and did not meet again until January, 1756. We are interested in the adjournment, for the proceeding enables us to catch sight of John Wesley. We see him in the robe-chamber adjoining to the House of Lords; he is watching George II as he is being prepared for the adjournment ceremony. Wesley's sympathies were excited during this process. The King was seventy-two years of age; he was pressed down by the burden of a great anxiety. 'His brow was much furrowed with age and quite clouded with care.' He was a small man, and when his robes were heaped on him, and the crown was placed on his head, Wesley thought, 'Is this all the world can give to a King? What a bauble is human greatness!'[1] These are not the usual platitudes with which we soothe ourselves in the presence of persons of higher social position. John Wesley had a great regard for the King. He knew that he had used his influence to prevent the persecution of the Methodists, and that his interference had restrained the magistrates of Middlesex, although it had failed to stop the riots in many parts of the country. George II knew the value of Wesley's work. There are few historians who praise him; but his declaration that 'no man in his dominions should be persecuted on account of religion while he sat on the throne' lives in our memory.[2]

It is no wonder that the King was oppressed with care. It must be remembered that Hanover as well as England was on his mind. Each country was in serious peril. At any moment they might be attacked by overwhelming forces. His thoughts at the time of the adjournment of the British Parliament were engaged with the peril of Hanover; he was

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 145.

[2] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 39.

trying to secure a treaty with Frederick the Great of Prussia which would lessen the danger threatening his Continental possession. On January 16, 1756, a convention of neutrality was signed by the two Kings which seemed to meet the Hanover difficulty, but the English problem was not easily solved. Lecky, in his *England in the Eighteenth Century*, declares that nothing could be more deplorable than the condition of England at that time. In his opinion the years 1756 and 1757 were among the most humiliating in the history of this country. It was common news that there were only three regiments in England fit for service. The rising alarm of the people was swiftly approaching danger-point. In the words of Edmund Burke, 'The nation trembled under a shameful panic too public to be concealed, too fatal in its consequences to be ever forgotten.'[1] The convention with Frederick made it possible to employ Hanoverian and other Continental troops in England; and the spectacle of foreign soldiers practising the Prussian drill in Hyde Park was afforded to indignant Londoners. Recalling incidents in the American Revolution, we experience no slight shock when we notice the presence of Hessian troops in some of our coast towns. When Parliament reassembled, the House of Commons, on January 21, turned its attention to the laws then in being relating to the Militia. It was found that they were insufficient. A new Bill was prepared; and, after receiving many amendments, it was passed and sent up to the House of Lords. Smollett, suppressing his feelings, records its fate. He says:

> But several objections being made to it by some of the peers, and it seeming to them, as they said, that some farther amendments were still necessary, which they thought they could not in that session spare time to consider so maturely as the importance of the subject required, a negative of fifty-nine against twenty-three was put upon the motion for passing the Bill; though every one must have been sensible, not only of the propriety, but even of the absolute necessity of such a law, which was ardently desired by the whole nation.[2]

Parliament, when it reassembled in January, had to face a critical condition of national affairs. Wesley was in full sympathy with those who took a serious view of the perils that threatened the country. On January 1, 1756,

[1] Lecky's *History*, ii. 362.

[2] Smollett's *Continuation of the History of England*, i. 302–303.

there is this entry in his *Journal*: 'How much are men divided in their expectations concerning the ensuing year! Will it bring a large harvest of temporal calamities or of spiritual blessings? Perhaps of both—of temporal afflictions preparatory to spiritual blessings.' He seems to have had no doubt that 'temporal afflictions' were advancing on the nation, and he was not mistaken. As a loyal Englishman he determined to take his share of the burden. We have seen that before the close of the preceding year he had formed a design of assisting the Government by raising a company of volunteers who would be ready to act in case of invasion. The scheme was maturing in his mind. On March 1 he wrote the letter to the Hon. James West containing his offer of the company. The letter seems to have been read and pigeon-holed. Nothing came of the offer.[1]

On February 6 a national fast was observed. Such a fast in London had not been seen since the Restoration. Business was suspended, and churches and chapels were crowded. On March 1 John Wesley set out for Bristol. When he arrived, he found the city 'all in a flame.' An election for a Member of Parliament was proceeding. In Latimer's *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century* we get particulars of those exciting days. The Tory candidate was Mr. Jarrit Smith, an eminent local attorney; the Whig candidate was the Hon. John Spencer, afterwards Earl Spencer. Latimer says that Wesley was said 'to have worked energetically on behalf of Mr. Smith'; but from a letter written to Ebenezer Blackwell we find that Latimer was mistaken. Here is the letter:

BRISTOL, *March* 4, 1756.

DEAR SIR.—If the election of Mr. Spencer be a thing of any consequence, then it was extremely ill judged to prevent his coming down. He ought to have been here at all hazards if he were not very dangerously ill. His absence will probably turn the scale; and, if the Jacobites gain one member now, they will have two the next time. Whereas there is reason to believe, had Mr. Spencer appeared, there would have been no opposition.

Last night, I desired all the freemen of our society to meet me after preaching, and enlarged a little upon His Majesty's character, and

[1] In an editorial note in Wesley's Standard *Journal* it is recorded that such a 'company' was actually raised early in the next century; it was billeted within a stone's-throw of the 'New Room' in Bristol; it held prayer-meetings at which, as in John Wesley's days, soldiers were converted and received into the Methodist Society. *Journal*, iv. 151 *note*.

the reasons we had to spare no pains in his service. I believe all who had been wavering were fully convinced. But some had absolutely promised to vote for Mr. Smith; it having been confidently reported, that both the candidates are equally acceptable to His Majesty.

The whole city is in confusion. Oh what a pity there could not be some way of managing elections of every sort, without this embittering of Englishmen against Englishmen, and kindling fires which cannot be quenched in many years![1]

It will be seen that John Wesley supported the King and the Government; but, after a close contest, continued for fourteen days, Mr. Smith was elected by a majority of fifty-two votes. The city was the scene of constant disorder. After the poll was declared, a triumphal arch was erected in College Green. One of its ornaments was a carved representation of the royal arms of the Stuarts which was borrowed from All Saints' Church. This decoration, being without the heraldic blazon of the Hanoverian family, was held to be a token of sympathy with the Pretender; it caused so much excitement that it had to be removed. The Young Pretender was supposed to have figured in this election. Dr. Josiah Tucker, a prebendary of the Cathedral and the rector of St. Stephen's Church, writing to a friend, says: 'I have been pestered all day with a lot of Methodist preachers who insist upon it that they have started and are now hunting a strange kind of game called the Young Pretender, and have fairly tracked him to Mr. Jarrit Smith's house at Ashton, where he is at present under cover.' It was with difficulty that Dr. Tucker prevented his informants from making a deposition before the judges of assize.[2]

John Wesley stayed for a few days in Bristol. Then he set out on a visit to Wales and Ireland. He reached Brecon on March 18, and preached in the Town Hall. The next day he rode to Trevecca to see his old friend, Howell Harris, who had settled at his birthplace, after seventeen years of hard work as an itinerant evangelist. A few people who had received a blessing through his ministry gathered around him. He preached to them two or three times a day, and they expressed an earnest desire to stay with him. In April, 1752, he laid the foundation of a house; and in 1753, a part of the building being finished, a great number of people flocked

[1] The letter appears in Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 235. It is copied from the *Methodist Magazine*, 1848, 777.

[2] Latimer's *Annals of Bristol*, 318–319.

to Trevecca from all parts of Wales. Some stayed for a time, others returned home; but a number remained to enjoy the privilege of the preaching. At the beginning of 1754 there was 'a settled family' at Trevecca consisting of about a hundred persons. The next year several families came to the place, some to live in the house; others took farms in the neighbourhood in order that they might have a more convenient opportunity of attending the preaching. Gradually 'a family' gathered around Harris which had to be maintained, and which must have caused him some anxiety. But he was a man of strong faith, and he cast his burden on the Lord. In 1756 we see him surrounded by his people. The outbreak of war caused him concern. He brought the matter before the young men of the 'family.' Five of them went to Hereford and joined the 58th regiment. Subsequently they embarked for America, and fought at Louisbourg and at the taking of Quebec.[1]

The visit to Trevecca must have reminded Wesley of the old days in Georgia, when he formed a 'Christian family' in the parsonage in the woods.[2] There was one subject, however, which weighed on his mind, and he determined to have a talk with Harris about it. So he went to Trevecca again. The story of Harris's experiences in connexion with the building of the 'House' and the maintenance of 'the family' much impressed him. He says, 'Except in the case of the Orphan House at Halle, I never heard so many signal interpositions of divine Providence.' But he wanted to know why his friend 'did not go out and preach as usual.' So on his second visit he raised the subject. Harris told him that he had preached till he could preach no longer, his constitution being entirely broken. While he was confined to his home 'he had been pressed in spirit to build a large house, though he knew not why or for whom. But as soon as it was built men, women, and children, without his seeking, came to it from all parts of Wales.' And so he had given up his itinerant life, and devoted himself to the care of his large 'family.' Wesley had to be satisfied with that explanation, though he must have felt a pang of regret as he thought of the lessening of the number of the old itinerants who had been his

[1] See *A Brief Account of the Life of Howell Harris*, second part, 77–84.
[2] *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 158.

comrades in the early days of the Methodist Revival. We, who can see further down 'the corridors of Time,' know that the itinerating days of Howell Harris were not ended. Towards the end of 1759, during the Seven Years' War, the dread of invasion once more disturbed the minds of English people. At this point Harris, who was deeply concerned for the welfare of the Kingdom in general, was offered a commission in the Brecknockshire Militia. After seriously considering the matter, he accepted the offer on the condition that he should have full liberty to preach the gospel wherever he should go. This permission was granted. After making all necessary arrangement for the care of the household during his absence, he, with twenty-four men of the 'family,' were embodied in the Militia for three years' service at the beginning of 1760. He paid for three years the cost of arms, clothing, and maintenance of twelve of the volunteers he brought with him. He began as an ensign and ended as captain. The understanding about preaching was observed. He preached in his regimentals in many places during the years when he was in the army. We can see him at Yarmouth, in the towns about Brecon, in Bideford, Torrington, Barnstaple, and Plymouth. When the war was over he returned to Trevecca and spent the remainder of his life with his large 'family'; but he took 'a few rounds now and then,' and preached both in England and Wales.[1]

John Wesley made his way to Holyhead and crossed to Ireland. He had not been there for nearly four years. The condition of his health was the cause of his absence for so long a time. On March 30 he found himself once more in Dublin. The next day he had a conversation with many people, and was surprised to find that they considered that Ireland was in perfect safety. He says: 'None here has any more apprehension of an invasion than of being swallowed up in the sea, every one being absolutely assured that the French dared not attempt any such thing.' He had his own thoughts about that matter, and it was not long before all his suspicions were confirmed. The Government in England seems to have arrived at the conclusion that it was possible that the French, instead of trying to land a force in England or Ireland, might

[1] *Methodist Magazine* for 1825, 308; Williams's *Welsh Calvinistic Methodism*, 125–126.

make an attack on some other part of the British possessions. We see, about April 7, a fleet of ten English ships, under the command of Admiral Byng, making its way slowly towards the French coast. It had been swiftly and inefficiently equipped. Its destination was Minorca, an island which was in British possession at that time, and was considered as 'the key of the Mediterranean.' It was compelled to stop at intervals for absolutely necessary repairs, also to secure troops from the Gibraltar garrison. As to the latter, Byng appealed to the commander in vain. It was not until May 15 that the British fleet appeared off Minorca. What had happened in the interval? On April 10 a French fleet, with an army of about fourteen thousand men, sailed from Toulon, and on April 17 this army landed in Minorca. The little English force of about three thousand men quickly abandoned the open towns as indefensible, and concentrated in the Castle of St. Philip, which was at once besieged by the French. Under General Blakeney the castle held out until the English fleet arrived. On May 20 the French fleet attacked it, and a partial and indecisive engagement was fought. Byng saw that, until he was strongly reinforced, it was hopeless to continue the attempt to recapture the island. He called a council, and with its unanimous assent he drew off his fleet to cover Gibraltar, and to await reinforcements. The troops in the Castle of St. Philip watched the ships sailing away. After a brave resistance the castle was taken on June 28; and thus, says Lecky, 'Minorca, which contained one of the finest harbours in the Mediterranean, and which was one of the most valuable fruits of the Peace of Utrecht, passed into French hands.' It is well known that Admiral Byng was brought before a court-martial, tried, sentenced to death, and, on March 14, 1757, was shot. His execution, says Lecky, 'reflected much more real discredit upon the nation that demanded it than the military disaster that caused it.'[1]

John Wesley's visit to Ireland occurred during the months that immediately preceded and followed the breaking-out of the Seven Years' War. When he landed as we have said, he was concerned at the unprepared condition of the island in such a time of peril. The people smiled at the thought of the possibility of invasion. Then they gradually awoke. On

[1] Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 363–365; 372–375.

Monday April 5, we find this entry in his *Journal*: 'To-night the sleepers here began to open their eyes, it being rumoured that an express was come to the Lord-Lieutenant to inform him the French were hastening their preparation, being determined to land in Ireland. And so they will if God gives them leave; but He has the reins in His own hand.' This was not the first warning the Lord-Lieutenant had received. Several weeks before he had received a message from England informing him that His Majesty had given express orders to put the kingdom in a posture of defence against the intended invasion, and telling him he was empowered to raise what men he pleased. Wesley's informant, who told him this piece of news, ended his statement with the words: 'And nothing has been done since; so that we conclude the whole to be a grimace, a mere trick of State.' On April 19 Wesley wrote to Ebenezer Blackwell. In his letter he says, 'While you in England are under I know not what apprehensions, all here are as safe as if they were already in Paradise. We have no fortifying of sea-ports; no military preparations; but all is in absolute peace and safety. Both high and low seem fully persuaded that the whole talk of an invasion is only a trick to get money.'[1] It has been said, with a tincture of malice, that England prepares for war after, not before, it breaks out. It is not impossible to find some justification for that criticism.

John Wesley was not accustomed to wait for 'favourable circumstances' before beginning his work; with his usual steadiness of mind he faced the situation in Ireland and concentrated his attention on the condition of the Methodist Societies. We will content ourselves by recording a few of the outstanding events of his visit. On Sunday, April 11, when he was in Dublin, he met about a hundred children who were accustomed to be catechized publicly twice a week. Thomas Walsh, some months before, had begun the practice, and the fruit already appeared. Work among the children was after Wesley's own heart. But Thomas Walsh's 'children's classes' was a new departure. We feel the glow of Wesley's admiration when we read this record in his *Journal*: 'What a pity that all our preachers in every place have not the zeal and wisdom to follow his example!' On Good Friday, April 16, he held a solemn service for 'the renewal of the covenant.' Near

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 169, 8vo ed.

four hundred of the members of Society assembled ' to follow the example of their brethren in England.' The next week the preachers came together to hold the second Irish Conference. We have no record of its proceedings, but they were characterized by a spirit which gave Wesley great encouragement. He says : ' I never before found such unanimity among them. They appeared now to be not only of one heart, but likewise of one mind and judgement.'

Passing by many incidents of Wesley's visit to Ireland which find a record in his *Journal* and in Crookshank's *History of Methodism*, we note that on April 28 he set off on a country tour. In its course he was joined by Thomas Walsh. At Kilkenny a dragoon regiment was quartered. One of the soldiers soon found him out. Wesley says, ' A few, both of the army and of the town, are joined, and constantly meet together. I preached in the barracks, in one of the officers' rooms. Still, in Ireland, the first call is to the soldiery.' With Thomas Walsh he rode to Waterford, and spent some time with the Society, striving to remove ' misunderstandings and offences.' It was not lost labour. The Society had been reduced to twenty-six members ; but before night the number was increased to fifty-seven. As there seemed to be a ' general call to the city,' he left Thomas Walsh there for a time. He went on to Clonmel, and was charmed with the beauty of the town. He declared that it was the pleasantest town, beyond all comparison, he had up to that time seen in Ireland.

On May 12 Wesley was in Cork, where he preached in ' the new house.' It was nearly as large as the Whitefriar Street chapel in Dublin, and far better finished in every respect, though at four hundred pounds less expense. Like the ' Houses ' in Newcastle-on-Tyne, Bristol, and Whitefriar Street in Dublin, it had rooms overhead, in which the preachers resided and classes met. This arrangement seems to have been approved by Wesley, but in after years it was strongly condemned by Adam Clarke, that famous Irishman. He declared that it contributed much to his own ill-health when he was stationed in Bristol. He says that ' all the lodging-rooms were over the chapel, and the noxious effluvia from the breath of so many hundreds of people who assembled there throughout the week made the place extremely unhealthy. The plan of building all the

lodging-rooms over the chapel and on which several of the original Methodist preaching-houses were built, was greatly prejudicial to the health of the preachers and their families.' A visit to the 'Room' in Bristol will convince the spectator that Adam Clarke's judgement was sound.[1]

Having spent three weeks in Cork and its vicinity, Wesley set out for Limerick, where he again met with Thomas Walsh. While in Cork he received from Dr. Gillies the sad news of the death of their friend Mr. Wardrobe. The loss was great; it was impossible to contemplate it without sadness. But the imperative voice of duty spoke to Wesley, and sent him on his way. On June 16 we find him, for the first time, in Ballingarrane. Those who are able to see the patterns woven on 'the loom of Time' will pause for a few moments as they stand in the street of this town. Many of its inhabitants were Palatines who came to Ireland in Queen Anne's time. Wesley, in describing them says: 'They retain much of the temper and manners of their own country, having no resemblance of those among whom they live. I found much life among this plain, artless, serious people. The whole town came together in the evening, and praised God for the consolation. Many of those who are not outwardly joined with us walk in the light of God's countenance; yea, have divided themselves into classes, in imitation of our brethren, with whom they live in perfect harmony.' He met the Methodist Society on the following evening. He felt himself under a special influence, which so overpowered him that he was obliged to pause several times. The words of the plain, honest people came with so much weight as frequently to stop him for a while. Then a general cry rose from the lips of hearers. What did Philip Embury say in that solemn meeting? And what said Barbara Ruckle? And what said Wesley to them? We have no record. We must be content to watch the movements of the 'loom of Time'; then we shall see Philip Embury and Barbara Heck in a land that lies far from the waves that break on the rocks of Ireland.

It was towards the end of June that Wesley had a strange experience. He preached in the churches at Hollymount, Castlebar, and Newport with the consent of their clergymen. Then, on Monday, July 14, he crossed the border-line of Ulster.

[1] *An Account of Adam Clarke, LL.D.*, i. 276.

His preachers had been labouring there for nearly six years, and had met with much success; but this was his first visit to the province. On July 23 he rode to Belfast, and preached in the afternoon in the market-house. At this time Belfast had a population of eight thousand five hundred and forty-nine. Most of the houses were thatched. There was only one Episcopalian place of worship, the 'old Corporation Church' in High Street, and three Presbyterian meeting-houses, the minister of one of which was an Arian.[1]

On Sunday, July 25, Wesley was in Carrickfergus. He preached at nine o'clock in the upper court-house; after the service, according to his usual custom, he went to church and heard 'a lively useful sermon.' Many people were surprised at his attending a church. He tells us that after dinner 'one of our brethren asked if I was ready to go to meeting. I told him, "I never go to meeting." He seemed as much astonished as the old Scot at Newcastle, who left us because we were mere Church of England men. We are so, although we condemn none who have been brought up in another way.' His answer to the man who wished to direct his movements on that Sunday afternoon has been much misunderstood. His reply was not the utterance of a narrow-minded bigot, but a statement of his invariable practice. He always went to the church when it was possible for him to attend its services. But it will be remembered that his advice to the dissenting members of his Societies was that on Sunday they should attend their own chapels. In Scotland, as we have seen, he worshipped in Dr. Gillies's Presbyterian church. His sermons on 'A Caution against Bigotry' and 'Catholic Spirit' had been published, and in them his opinions had been expressed. In the latter sermon, speaking of the great variety of forms of worship, he says:

> How shall we choose among so much variety? No man can choose for, or prescribe to, another. But every one must follow the dictates of his own conscience, in simplicity and godly sincerity. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind; and then act according to the best light he has. Nor has any creature power to constrain another to walk by his own rule. God has given no right to any of the children of men thus to lord it over the conscience of his brethren; but every man must judge for himself, as every man must give an account of himself to God.

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism*, i. 115.

Although, therefore, every follower of Christ is obliged, by the very nature of the Christian Institution, to be a member of some particular congregation or other, some Church, as it is usually termed (which implies a particular manner of worshipping God ; for ' two cannot walk together unless they be agreed ') ; yet none can be obliged by any power on earth but that of his own conscience, to prefer this or that congregation to another, this or that particular manner of worship. I know it is commonly supposed that the place of our birth fixes the Church to which we ought to belong ; that one, for instance, who is born in England, ought to be a member of that which is styled the Church of England ; and, consequently, to worship God in the particular manner which is prescribed by that Church. I was once a zealous maintainer of this ; but I find many reasons to abate of this zeal. I fear it is attended with such difficulties as no reasonable man can get over : not the least of which is, that if this rule had took place, there could have been no Reformation from Popery ; seeing it entirely destroys the right of private judgement, on which the whole Reformation stands.

I dare not, therefore, presume to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical : but my belief is no rule for another. I ask not, therefore, of him with whom I would unite in love, Are you of my Church ? of my congregation ? Do you receive the same form of Church government, and allow the same Church officers, with me ? Do you join in the same form of prayer wherein I worship God ? I inquire not, Do you receive the supper of the Lord in the same posture and manner as I do ? nor whether, in the administration of baptism, you agree with me in admitting sureties for the baptized ; in the manner of administering it ; or the age of those to whom it should be administered. Nay, I ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind) whether you allow baptism and the Lord's supper at all. Let all these things stand by ; we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season ; my only question at present is this : ' Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart ? '[1]

We have almost forgotten Carrickfergus as we have been transcribing these noble words. But at intervals we have been reminded of the declaration of an Irishman who possessed much of John Wesley's spirit. He was a Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Dublin, and a preacher of sermons that have lingered in our memory through long years. Here is an extract from one of them : ' The sheepfold of Christ's flock is no material or visible inclosure ; it is the circle of love which is traced in the eternal mind of the good Shepherd Himself, and whose compass is known to Him alone. . . . We know that the history of the people of Christ is a history not written in any earthly volume ; there are no statistics of

[1] Wesley's *Works*, v. 496, 497.

this holy nation ; no record that can be numbered and understood by every cursory inquirer. The Father, " who seeth in secret," will reward openly ; but this life is not the season of that reward.' William Archer Butler's deep and quiet words tranquillize the mind. They call us away from the disputes of the sects. They lead us to the heights from which we think we can see something of the beauty of the Good Shepherd's ' circle of love.'[1]

Having preached and gone to church in the morning, Wesley went to the Carrickfergus court-house in the evening. He found that the congregation was so large that no room would hold the people. He received a message from the prison that touched him. It was that ' the prisoners desired to hear him ' ; so he went into the street and took his stand near the prison door. Speaking ' plain and home,' he urged upon the crowd his great message, ' Ye must be born again ' ; and ' the prisoners were listening.' There was some interruption among those assembled outside, but the tone of satisfaction in Wesley's entry in his *Journal* is evident. On Monday he returned to Belfast. When he got there he found Thomas Walsh, who told him a story that filled him with sympathy. Walsh had visited Newtownards, and had been badly treated. At :empting to hold a service in the open air, he began to pray, and at once a man seized him by the throat and dragged him down. He was the leader of a large mob. A Mr. Beers compelled the ruffian to let go his hold ; but soon the would-be rescuer was beaten to the ground. Walsh once more tried to preach ; the mob assailed him, and he had to fly for his life. He hurried through the fields to a mountain. The rain came down in torrents. Crookshank says that he then received ' a wetting which laid the foundations of the disease that hastened him to the grave.'

Leaving Belfast, John Wesley made his way to the south. He reached Dublin on August 5, and then, about a week later, he arrived in Cork and made ready for his voyage to Holyhead. His travelling companions to England were Thomas Walsh, John Haughton, and James Morgan. We cannot leave Ireland without noting an event of great importance which occurred at Coolamain, in the parish of Ballynaslaney, Wexford. When we stood on Glastonbury Tor we looked across the plain and

[1] W. Archer Butler's *Sermons*, 318–319, second series.

saw hills which lie near Cheddar. What connexion is there between those hills and Coolamain? In August, 1756, we see a little company of people gathered in a barn at Coolamain; they are listening to a Methodist preacher named James Morris. In the small congregation we see a youth nearing his sixteenth birthday. He is the son of a major in the army, a Westminster boy, who has come to Ireland with his widowed mother, who had claims to an estate in that country. The lad listens eagerly to the plain man, who is preaching from Ephesians ii. 13: 'But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.' A new world gradually opens before his eyes. On that evening he realized the forgiveness of his sins. Recalling his experience, two years afterwards, he says, 'Strange that I, who had so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought nigh to God in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God's people met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could hardly spell his name.'[1] But what has that to do with the hills of Somerset? When we mention the name of the boy who listened to James Morris in the barn at Coolamain we shall cease to wonder. He was Augustus Montague Toplady. And in after years when the thunder-storm broke upon him in Burrington Coombe, he took shelter in a deep recess of a precipitous crag of limestone, and the lightning played about him in vain. We all know the story; and blessed is the man whose heart is 'strangely warmed' when he sings:

> Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee![2]

Wesley and his three preachers had a pleasant crossing from Cork to Holyhead. In addition to themselves they had five other cabin passengers, 'all civil and serious.' As for the sailors, they 'behaved uncommonly well.' On Thursday morning we see Wesley and his preachers on the quarter-deck. We hear them as they begin to sing. Their fellow passengers, as well as the captain, with the greatest part of his men, clustered around them. Wesley gave an exhortation. He says: 'We then spent some time in prayer. They all kneeled

[1] Crookshank' *History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 117.
[2] See Telford's *The Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated*, 257, revised ed.

down with us ; nor did their seriousness wear off all day. About nine o'clock we landed at Holyhead, after a pleasant passage of twenty-three hours.' Having hired horses for Chester, they rode to Bangor. The scenery between Bangor and Penmaenmawr filled Wesley with delight. Those who know the road will share his enthusiasm. When he reached Conway Castle he declared that it was the noblest ruin he had ever seen. The country made a strong appeal to that inextinguishable sense of beauty which often transfigured the commonplace surroundings of his life.

On Wednesday, August 25, John Wesley reached Bristol. The next day he held a Conference there, which was attended by about fifty of the preachers. His account of the proceedings is brief. Describing the business transacted on the first day, he tells us that the Rules of the Society were read over, and carefully considered one by one ; it was found that none of them could be spared. It was unanimously agreed ' to abide by them all, and to recommend them with our might.' Afterwards the question of the necessity of keeping in the Church, and using the clergy with tenderness, was discussed. Wesley says, ' There was no dissenting voice. God gave us all to be of one mind and of one judgement.' The next day the Rules of the Bands were considered one by one ; and, after some verbal alterations had been made, all agreed to observe and enforce them. On the Saturday the Rules of Kingswood School were considered, and it was agreed that a short account of the design and then present state of the school should be read by every assistant in every Society, and that a subscription for it should be begun in every place, and, if need be, a collection made for the school every year. Wesley also informs us that he and his brother closed the Conference by a solemn declaration of their purpose never to separate from the Church ; and that ' all our brethren concurred therein.'

We are indebted to Myles's *Chronological History* for light which will be welcomed by those who are interested in questions which concern the origin of the financial arrangements of the Methodist Societies. He tells us that at the Conference of 1756 the nature and necessity of the yearly subscription was fully explained, and that the subscription was earnestly recommended to the Methodist people. It had been made in a few of the Societies before that time, but at this Bristol

Conference it was recommended to be made in the classes at the Christmas visitation, and to be received at the following March visitation. It was to be applied ' to defray the expenses occasioned, 1. By building preaching-houses from the year 1740 to 1756; 2. By sending out Preachers who were able and willing to travel, but who could not provide themselves with necessaries; 3. To support the Preachers, while labouring in the poor Circuits in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland; 4. To enable the Preachers to take the benefit of the Law when persecuted by wicked and unreasonable men.' John Wesley wrote a strong letter of advice to the Societies explaining the objects and necessity of the yearly collection. We may judge the urgency of the case when we note that the debts owing on the preaching-houses which had been erected amounted to nearly four thousand pounds—a serious sum at that time.[1]

When the Conference was over, John Wesley had to remain a week in Bristol, for his pertinacious complaint returned and he was disabled from work. The prevailing idea that John Wesley was a man of extraordinary strength of body must be laid aside. He did his wonderful work in spite of constantly recurring feebleness. We have noticed some of the interruptions which laid him aside, but one of the members of the Wesley Historical Society, the late Rev. Richard Butterworth, made a special inquiry into this question. After Mr. Butterworth's death the result of his searches in Wesley's *Journal* and *Diaries* was published in the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society. He found that, taking the year 1739 as his starting-point, and carrying his investigations down to 1790, there were notices of sixty-nine attacks of sickness in the books examined. He says that the number would probably have to be increased if the whole of the *Diary* were discovered.[2]

On September 7 John Wesley managed to get to London. He proceeded to inquire into the condition of his ' temporal affairs.' He kept his accounts with strictness, and continued the practice until nearly the end of his life. Let us see what he says at this point. ' It is now about eighteen years since I began writing and printing books; and how much in that time have I gained by printing? Why, on summing up my accounts

[1] Myles's *Chronological History*, 78–79. Fourth ed.
[2] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, xiv. 162–165.

I found that on March 1, 1756, the day I left London last, I had gained, by printing and preaching together, a debt of twelve hundred and thirty-six pounds.'

With the return of his strength he at once resumed his work. On Sunday, October 10, he preached to a huge multitude in Moorfields on 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel?' The service roused his enthusiasm. He declared that field-preaching 'does the execution still; for usefulness there is none comparable to it.' The rest of the year he remained in London, intent on doing good. He met the preachers who were in town and read with them important books. He cared for sick people. He had been much impressed by Benjamin Franklin's *Experiments and Observations on Electricity*, first published in London in 1751. In 1756 he determined to test the remedial value of electricity in certain cases. On November 9 he procured an apparatus and tested its effects on some sick people. In his *Journal* we find the following account of his experiment, noting the fact that the entry was made after the lapse of about three years:

> Having procured an apparatus on purpose, I ordered several persons to be electrified, who were ill of various disorders; some of whom found an immediate, some a gradual cure. From this time I appointed, first some hours in every week, and afterward an hour in every day, wherein any that desired it might try the virtue of this surprising medicine. Two or three years after, our patients were so numerous that we were obliged to divide them; so part were electrified in Southwark, part at the Foundery, others near St. Paul's, and the rest near the Seven Dials. The same method we have taken ever since; and to this day, while hundreds, perhaps thousands, have received unspeakable good, I have not known one man, woman, or child, who has received any hurt thereby.

Before closing this volume there is a subject which must receive our attention. It is impossible to overlook the fact that in 1756 there was a decided weakening of the association of John and Charles Wesley as itinerating evangelists. We may go farther, and say that, at the end of the year, Charles Wesley practically retired from that form of Methodist work. It will throw light on several questions if we watch him on what may be considered his last campaign. We do not know why he set out on his long journey; but it is not impossible that after the conversations in the Conference on the relations

of the Methodists to the Church of England he may have thought if he went North his influence might check the tendency to separation which was so strong in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Northumberland. That our surmise is correct we think will be admitted if we follow him on his way.

Charles Wesley's published *Journal* closes with a long extract which extends from September 17 to November 5, 1756. Let us look at a few of his entries. On September 19 he was in Evesham. He went to church morning and evening. Between the services he visited three or four of the Society. During this visitation he did a notable thing. He found that the names of those whom he visited had been left off the Society Book, the reason being that they had not been able to attend the meetings, having been prevented by age and infirmity. He wrote their names again in the book. During his pastoral visits he did not forget 'to confirm the brethren in their calling; that is, to live and die in the Church of England.' Reaching Sheffield, he met the Society, and spoke plainly and lovingly to the members on the subject of 'continuing in the Church.' Though many of them were Dissenters and predestinarians, none were offended. In Leeds, after preaching, he plainly told the Society that 'there was no salvation *out of the Church*,' which caused some surprise. He proceeded to explain that by the Church he meant 'the mystical body of Christ, or the company of faithful people.' It would be a little difficult for the people to follow his explanation, but he tells us that they *suffered* the word of exhortation, and were even glad when he said unto them, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.' In Leeds, once more he introduced the subject, and tells us that the members of the Society 'were unanimous to stay in the Church, because the Lord stays in it, and multiplies His witnesses therein, more than any other Church in Christendom.' In Manchester he found that the Society, which had numbered two hundred, had been much reduced. He met those who remained, and told them that 'of all the members of the Church of England the poor Methodists are most exposed, because serious, and therefore worth stealing; and of all the Methodists those of Manchester were in the greatest danger, because the most unsettled and unadvisable.' He challenged them to show him one Methodist who had ever prospered by turning Dissenter. He asked the members

what would become of them when his brother died—whether they would not then be scattered and broken in twenty sects, old and new. To prevent this he advised them, among other remedies, to go constantly to church and sacrament. We may say that throughout the whole of this tour Charles Wesley continued these exhortations to the Methodist Societies. By word of mouth and by letters he entreated the Methodists to remain in the Church of England.[1]

There can be no doubt of the enthusiasm of Charles Wesley for the Established Church. It made him blind to the fact of the immense debt England owes to the Nonconformists. In addition, he did not realize the strength of the current that was bearing away so many of the Methodist people from the Church of England. We cannot think that he was satisfied with the results of his visit to the North. When he got back to Bristol, on November 6, 1756, he must have thought it a pleasant place of refuge. He settled there for many years, and left the unclaimed wildernesses outside to his brother and his workers. John Wesley accepted his fate. With his comrades, he went out to break up the fallow ground, to sow the seed, and to reap and store the harvest.

[1] *Journal of Charles Wesley*, ii. 114–139.

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